

# ASR

**Anarcho-Syndicalist Review**

Summer 2009, #52, \$5.00

**Darwinism at 150:  
Evolution & Mutual Aid**

**Social Biology and Solidarity  
We Won't Pay for Their Crisis**

# ZOMBIE CAPITALISM



**Also: Employee Free Choice Act, Unions in Crisis, Book Reviews**

# Principles of Revolutionary Syndicalism

## (EXTRACTS)

I. Revolutionary Syndicalism, basing itself on the class struggle, seeks to establish the unity and solidarity of all manual and intellectual workers into economic organizations fighting for the abolition of both the wage system and the State. Neither the State nor political parties can achieve the economic organization and emancipation of labor.

II. Revolutionary Syndicalism maintains that economic and social monopolies must be replaced by free, self-managed federations of agricultural and industrial workers united in a system of councils.

III. The two-fold task of Revolutionary Syndicalism is to carry on the daily struggle for economic, social and intellectual improvement in the existing society, and to achieve independent self-managed production and distribution by taking possession of the earth and the means of production. Instead of the State and political parties, the economic organization of labor. Instead of government over people, the administration of things.

IV. Revolutionary Syndicalism is based on the principles

of federalism, free agreement and grass roots organization from the base upwards into local, district, regional and international federations united by shared aspirations and common interests. Under federalism, each unit enjoys full autonomy and independence in its own sphere, while enjoying all the advantages of association.

V. Revolutionary Syndicalism rejects nationalism, the religion of the State, and all arbitrary frontiers, recognizing only the self-rule of natural communities freely enjoying their own way of life, constantly enriched by the benefits of free association with other federated communities.

VI. Revolutionary Syndicalism, basing itself on economic direct action, supports all struggles not in contradiction with its principles – the abolition of economic monopoly and the domination of the State. The means of direct action are the strike, the boycott, the sit-in, and other forms of direct action developed by the workers in the course of their struggles leading to labor's most effective weapon, the General Strike, prelude to social revolution.

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## Treading Water in the Struggle Against the Deficit

This is our second issue of 2009, putting us somewhat behind schedule, although we expect to send a third to the printer in September. We will begin editing that issue in August. As always, your articles and letters are welcome.

As this issue went to press we had received \$1,265.93 in subscriptions and bundle payments since our last issue, and spent \$2,368.67 on printing and postage. Generous donations to our Publication Fund brought in \$1,065, bringing total income to \$2,313.93 – or \$38.74 less than expenses. As a result, our cumulative deficit increased to \$5,572.28. Your continued assistance in reducing this long-standing debt is needed and appreciated. While the debt does not immediately imperil publication, it does stand in the way of our efforts to build circulation and improve the Review.

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We publish this journal to reach out to our fellow workers, and join in a conversation about how we can build a new society free of exploitation and oppression. Why not ask your local bookstore to carry ASR?

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*Letters, articles, reviews and responses to articles published in the Review are always welcome. Please type these double-spaced; the copy deadline for #53 is August 10, 2009. (If articles can be submitted electronically in .rtf or similar format, this would be appreciated.)*

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## EFCA is not the solution

*As we go to press, the Democrats seem to be abandoning the Employee Free Choice Act, despite receiving hundreds of millions of dollars in campaign assistance (and countless hours of campaign work) from the business unions. This continues a long string of broken promises dating back to the origins of the labor movement's dealings with the politricksters. But even if one could place one's faith in politicians, the law would do little to build workers' actual power:*

For bosses everywhere it is the end of the world as we know it. For progressives and trade unionists it is nothing less than the salvation of the labor movement. The Employee Free Choice Act, recently re-introduced to the U.S. Congress, is being touted as the most significant piece of labor legislation since the Wagner Act of 1935 made the promotion of collective bargaining the centerpiece of U.S. labor policy.

Bosses' organizations like the Chamber of Commerce, Center for Union Facts and Freedom's Watch have poured millions of dollars into a campaign to sway their bought-and-paid-for politicians to do right by them and defeat the unions. The main mouthpiece of big capital, *The Wall Street Journal*, has been particularly vocal in opposition to the Act. And Starbucks and Whole Foods – both experienced union-busting operations – have put forward a “compromise” that would continue the current system (with slightly higher penalties when companies such as themselves are caught violating the law), but allow the bosses to go after union treasuries if workers “abuse” the bosses.

For its part, the mainstream labor movement is also pouring millions of dollars and members' time into campaigning for

passage of the Act. They are hoping that their efforts to help elect Barack Obama president of the U.S. and Democratic senators and representatives will finally pay off.

The main element of the Act that has bosses fuming and labor bureaucrats swooning is the provision for NLRB certification as exclusive collective bargaining agent of any union that can convince 50 plus 1 percent of a defined bargaining unit to sign cards authorizing the union to bargain with management over wages and working conditions, so-called *card check* recognition. Card check is already possible within the current law, if the union can convince the boss to recognize it as the collective bargaining agency of his/her workforce. Bosses very rarely agree to card check, preferring an NLRB supervised election, which gives them time to mount an anti-union campaign of harassment and intimidation to convince workers to vote no union.

The bosses' main argument against card check is that it will take away the employees' sacred “secret ballot” and that workers will be subjected to intimidation from union goons to sign authorization cards. The fact is that a secret ballot election remains an option where workers petition for one. In addition, provisions for union decertification remain the same, if bosses can convince 30% of their wage slaves to petition for same. So the ballot argument is just a cover for the fact that employers' fear that given a chance their workers would opt for union representation (recent polls show that 53% of workers would join a union if given a chance), which would mean that they would have to give up *total* control of their businesses and perhaps some of their profits.

The EFCA also increases penalties for bosses who fire workers during organizing campaigns, granting up to three times back pay to the fired worker and levying a possible \$20,000 civil fine on the employer. While this might give smaller employers an incentive to play nice, larger employers will simply include these as costs of doing business, if the law is even enforced.

Given the vehement opposition to the EFCA by the employing class one is tempted to embrace the law and champion its passage; but there are provisions in the new law that should give rank-and-file workers pause. The law provides for mediation by the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service if the employer and collective bargaining agency cannot come to agreement on a contract within 90 days of certification. If mediation fails to bring about agreement then the law provides for binding arbitration, which will result in the imposition of a two-year contract that workers won't have the opportunity to vote on. In other words, the workers will have as much say in their wages and working conditions as they had before.

The biggest cause for concern, however, is that while the law may make it easier for workers to join unions it says nothing about what kind of unions they will be joining or the nature of the relationship being entered into. Most authorization cards simply state that the signer authorizes such-and-such an organization to represent them in collective bargaining. It is not the same as actually becoming a member of a union. Indeed, most workers become union members only after the collective bargaining agreement is signed and a dues check-off is implemented. This idea of the union as simply a *collective bargaining agent* rather than an organization for struggle is at the root of business unionism. EFCA will simply make it easier for the business unions to increase their dues-paying base; it will not result in greater organization

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## Obama: Hope dies hard

Stepped-up war in Afghanistan, \$106 billion to continue that war and the U.S. occupation of Iraq, continuation of the Guantanamo prison camps (though in different locations), ever-bigger hand-outs to the banks and other bosses, \$100 billion to the IMF to continue shoving “economic reform” down the throats of governments to desperate for cash to resist, health care “reform” proposals so tied to the status quo that single-payer advocates are being arrested when they try to join the drafting process, a corporate lawyer for the Supreme Court, and total silence in response to calls for the appointment of a special prosecutor to investigate Bush administration crimes.

It's more of the same – government of the rich, for the rich. Main difference is that the speeches are better.

The April 13 issue of *The Nation* editorializes against Obama policies “wedded to the goal of restoring the financial system to the way it was before the crash”; on March 2 they editorialized against his “Bankrupt Bailout.” The Obama plan for the financial sector, they noted, “add[s] new wrinkles to the [Bush administration’s] doomed effort...” They attribute this to Obama’s decision to recycle technocrats from the old order, “rigorously exclud[ing] anyone identified as an unorthodox thinker.” That they find this distressing is understandable; oddly, they seem surprised as well.

We noted in our editorial last issue that the Obama victory offered no grounds for hope, and that only our fellow workers’ organization and direct action could effectively meet our immediate needs, let alone put us on the road to a decent society.

It is always easier to look to politicians to save us, but this can only result in shattered dreams and despair.

## “Best” companies to work for

For years, *Fortune* magazine has published an annual list of the “100 best companies to work for.” Each year, the list has astounded workers unfortunate enough to be wage slaves for the outfits spotlighted, and now the March/April *Columbia Journalism Review* pulls the curtain down on this fraud. It turns out the list is compiled by consulting firm Great Place to Work Institute, which chooses the “100 best” from a small list of applicants (353 for the most recent list), many their clients. The Institute accepts companies’ claims about working conditions at face value, even when they are self-evidently false. Thus, Starbucks says the annual salary of its most common hourly job is \$42,387 – a result obtained by excluding all part-timers, which is most of the frontline staff, and so reflects what managers, not workers, are paid.

Wages and benefits have little to do with making the list, as it happens. One non-union grocery chain has stayed on the list for a decade despite paying much less than other retailers and charging hefty premiums for health care; it does offer free yoga, but if they paid a living wage workers could afford their own. Companies get to pick and choose who is counted as an

**Editorial**, continued from page 3

of labor, unless rank-and-file workers decide to organize on the job in spite of the bureaucrats.

We anarcho-syndicalists and revolutionary unionists, of course, have no faith in the law. With or without the Employee Free Choice Act our task is the same: “to organize industrially for the everyday struggle with capitalists and to carry on production once capitalism has been overthrown.”

employee – part-timers, “independent contractors,” and other super-exploited workers make up a large share of the workforce at many of these firms, but are invisible in the rankings, which Best Company Team Manager Katie Popp concedes figure only “somewhat” in the selection process.

The bottom line? Wage slavery’s a drag.

## “Change to Win” labor fed collapses

A few years back, many labor “radicals” pinned their hopes on the new “Change to Win” labor federation, which promised to step up organizing and build a more powerful labor movement based on sectoral unions. Today, Change to Win is in ruins, and the piecards are fighting over the remains.

As we noted in ASR 37, there was never anything remotely democratic – let alone revolutionary – about the new set-up. The bulk of the new federation’s “organizing” was through cooperative deals where employers specified in advance which operations the unions would be given representation rights at, and what (if anything) workers would get. Much more money was spent on politicians than on organizing, and none of the new federation’s unions were internally democratic. This was, at root, a split based on bureaucratic maneuvering and titles, not strategic vision.

As Change to Win was forming, UNITE (textile workers) and HERE (hotel and restaurant) merged to form a new union that had nothing to do with the heralded sectoral strategy, but rather was a marriage of convenience between one set of union bureaucrats controlling a great deal of money and many functionaries but few members, and HERE, which had members and organizing campaigns but little money. When HERE elements recently took control of the union, UNITE HERE president Bruce Raynor decided to annul the merger and take the assets (a bank, benefit funds, buildings, etc.) with him. The Service Employees sought to capitalize on the break-up, setting up an interim Workers United to amalgamate UNITE Joint Board-controlled locals into SEIU. (Raynor resigned just as the union was removing him from office, and joined the SEIU staff as “president” of Workers United.) The whole operation is now in disarray with both sides fighting over who controls which contracts and which dues streams. Employers are taking advantage of the situation to stall on bargaining, and stop collecting union dues through the check-off. Jurisdictional disputes, raids and law suits are on the horizon as far as the eye can see. (But at least some publications are benefitting in this difficult media economy from full-page ads taken out by SEIU urging readers to lean on UNITE HERE to accept their offer to let it keep \$50 million of the union’s funds and divvy up the members through binding arbitration.)

SEIU faces its own internal strife as a result of its take-over of its West Coast healthcare affiliate, leading the former officials to launch an independent union that promises democracy (not that the officials were great champions of rank-and-file unionism before they came up against the Stern machine). In response, SEIU cut a deal with the California Nurses Association (which recently merged with the United American Nurses and joined the AFL-CIO) to end their bitter war and divide up the hospital workforce. (Many of the workers traded in the deal are outraged.) The United Food and Commercial Workers is struggling to hold on to its existing members, and has no strategy for organizing new ones. Of the CTW affiliates, only the Laborers are in decent shape.

Change to Win and AFL-CIO officials are now meeting

with the independent National Education Association (which never belonged to either) about (re) uniting, though thus far the AFL-CIO is insisting that Change to Win come back with their tails between their legs, refusing even token concessions to the breakaway bureaucrats.

### **An infestation of cops**

Dozens of activists are sitting in state and federal prisons today, the victims of police and FBI infiltrators who have joined environmental, anarchist and other activist groups, hinting that people need to get “more radical” and luring those who swallow the bait ever further into their trap. Some entered romantic relationships to gain their victims’ trust, others infiltrated so long ago that they can draw on their “activist cred” to shame new-comers into discussing or even committing illegal actions.

Comrades should not allow these provocateurs to do their work; we particularly owe it to people still developing their political analysis and strategic orientation to step in and warn them when they are being lured into conversations or actions (though most of the prosecutions have been based on mere talk) that could land them in prison for years to come.

### **Anarchist militia legal?**

Effectively reversing its *Presser v. Illinois* (1886) decision outlawing a several-hundred-strong workers’ militia organized by Chicago anarchists, the U.S. Supreme Court has overturned the District of Columbia’s ban on handguns, ruling that it violates the Second Amendment to the U.S. Constitution (*Parker v. District*). The case involved an individual claim, but given the Constitutional language about “militia” the logic must surely extend to armed groups of workers. One suspects, however, that the judges will find some way to evade this logic next time they confront an armed group of workers determined to defend their rights.

### **Crime does pay**

Katha Pollit, writing in the May 18 *Nation*, notes that many of the architects of the Bush administration’s torture policies (which were unquestionably illegal) are doing quite well, even if a handful of those who carried out the torture are sitting in the brig. Torture memo author John Yoo is being paid thousand of dollars a column to rant and rave in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* and is now a tenured law professor at UC Berkeley. His colleague Jay Bybee sits on the U.S. Court of Appeals inflicting his demented vision of the law on the rest of us. Former CIA head George Tenet is having millions shoveled his way in book contracts and corporate directorships. Douglas Feith is teaching at Harvard.

Crime does pay – at least if it’s in the service of the state.

### **The drug war**

A century ago, Errico Malatesta proposed a simple solution to the scourge of cocaine addiction plaguing Italy: make the drug available at a modest mark-up at every post office. This, he wrote, would eliminate the profit motive driving dealers to constantly entice new addicts while removing the need for addicts to commit crimes to finance their habits. And the modest profits could be used to finance a public health education campaign. Today, the Swiss government has gone a step further – providing heroin free to addicts, who need only present themselves at their neighborhood health clinic for their fix. A trial run persuaded them that this was more effective and safer than illegalization.

### **We won’t pay for their crisis!**

*The following statement was issued for May Day 2009, and endorsed by several syndicalist organizations around the world. We have edited the English translation furnished by the French National Confederation of Labor (CNT-F) for grammar:*

Today’s crisis of capitalism is confronting workers with two well-defined options: either keep on being subjected to an authoritarian and inegalitarian economic and social system, or build up resistances in order to impose a more fair distribution of wealth, and have our rights and freedom respected.

The revolutionary syndicalism, anarcho-syndicalism and class struggle syndicalism, which we embody offers a clear choice.

We refuse to keep on negotiating our defeats. On the contrary, we want to organize our victories. In that perspective, only inter-professional, multi-industry, renewable and general strikes, such as those currently sketched out in a few countries, can help us bend economic and political leaders to our will.

Only the flawless international solidarity of all workers, from the North to the South, and the West to the East, can shatter the economic and political system which crushes our rights and freedom daily.

Workers’ unions must take on their responsibility and do their utmost to reverse the balance of power, thus putting an end to this blackmail-with-the-threat-of-crisis which leads to policies of social destruction. It’s time we stopped complaining about the “excesses of liberalism” or accepting “reform through negotiation.” It’s time we stopped believing in “political changeovers” or “social dialogue.” It’s time we took action!

**We won’t pay for their crisis!**

Because we hold that exploitation has lasted too long; because we’re fed up with working faster and harder day after day to increase their profits; because we demand the right to health, education, quality public transport; because we demand the right for all to go about freely without countries or borders — for all these reasons and for many more, we call for the building up of a class unionism: revolutionary, anti-capitalist and anti-authoritarian, anti-imperialist and anti-colonialist; the only unionism in a position to reverse the balance of power.

For we assert, without beating about the bush, that the root cause of all social, political, international or environment crises is Capitalism. For we assert that behind the logic of profit lies a logic of death. Let’s put an end to Capitalism while there’s still time to do so! Through union and social struggle, let’s impose another social model — freer, fairer — to make sure our future is not a worse version of our present.

Endorsing Organizations: CNT (France), Solidaridad Obrera (Spain), ASSI (Spain), SAC (Swedish Workers Central Organization), Industrial Workers of the World (Great Britain, International Solidarity Commission), Luta Social (Portugal), ASOINCA (Colombia), Women’s Collective of Kabilia (Algeria), CGT (Spain), ODT (Morocco), SINALTRAINAL (National Union of Food Worker, Colombia), Workers Initiative - IP (Poland), USI (Italian Syndicalist Union), SISA (Italy), FOB (Argentina), ESD (Democratic Union Space, Morocco), CGT CI (General Confederation of Labor, Ivory Coast), USTKE (Kanak), NGWF (National Garment Workers Fed., Bangladesh), CLA (Council of Secondary Schools of Algeria), UNSTB (National Union of Benin Workers), Sindical Comité of Democratic Way (Morocco), ESE (Union of



*SAC members on the picket line, from Syndikalesterna*

Libertarian Syndicalists, Greece), CSP (Cameroon), ANDCM (National Association of Unemployed Graduates, Morocco)

### **Vietnamese garment workers wildcat**

More than 1,000 workers at a Taiwanese-owned garment factory in central Vietnam went on strike January 22. Ngo Gia Linh, a trade union official in the central Vietnamese port city of Danang, said workers at the Valley View Vietnam garment company struck to demand the company pay them their one-month's-wage year-end bonuses before the start of Tet, the Vietnamese lunar New Year. Linh said the company had promised to pay bonuses before Tet. When workers had received no payment by 21 January, they surrounded the office of Valley View general director Wong Sung Hsin and prevented him from leaving Vietnam for the holiday.

After meeting with local authorities, the company said it would pay workers a 13th monthly salary before the weekend. Many workers had been counting on the bonuses to pay for bus and train tickets to return to their home villages for the holiday. This was the third wildcat strike at Valley View in recent years, following one in 2005 and another last September. All three were related to salary payments.

There are no independent labor organizations in Vietnam, and by law workers must have the approval of the official national labor union to strike. The official union sees its role as mediating between companies and workers rather than taking sides. Vietnamese authorities reported 650 wildcat strikes last year, compared with 541 in 2007. Local media reports put the number at 762. Strikes rose due to rapid inflation in 2008, with prices rising 23 percent. Prices for foodstuffs rose 42 percent. (libcom.org)

### **F.O.R.A. rebuilding in Argentina**

The venerable warhorse of the Argentine anarchist syndicalist movement, the Federacion Obrera Regional Argentina, is once again showing signs of life. In April 2008 workers at the restaurant "La Pergola" in Buenos Aires took a stop work action to secure unpaid wages and overtime pay. The next day they were locked out by their employer. The workers, affiliated with the Sociedad de Resistencia de Oficios Varios Capital – F.O.R.A., declared a

strike and initiated a boycott of the restaurant.

Constant picketing, which had to confront employer and C.G.T. goons (the C.G.T. is the only "official" trade union in Argentina authorized to make collective agreements with employers), accompanied by protest letters to the employer from sections of the International Workers Association (to which the F.O.R.A. is affiliated), succeeded in wearing down the boss, forcing him to reinstate all of the fired workers.

According to Jacinto Cerda, General Secretary of the Federal Council of the F.O.R.A., rebuilding the organization began in 2001 with a small group of youngsters and a few octogenarians in Buenos Aires. By concentrating 100 percent of their energy in on-the-job activity they've managed to expand to other communities like Mendoza and Bahia Blanca.

### **Swedish Nazis firebomb syndicalists**

In 1999, Nazi activists murdered SAC (Swedish Workers Central organization, an independent syndicalist union) activist Bjorn Söderberg. Now they have tried again. Two SAC members from Stockholm and their 3-year-old daughter had to escape through the balcony of their third-floor apartment when Nazis set it on fire. Someone poured gasoline through their mailbox at 9 p.m. on Dec. 1, and then set it on fire – leaving the balcony as the only escape route. Fortunately, the fellow workers were able to lower their daughter to the neighbor downstairs before climbing down themselves.

This attack followed by just two days a fire that destroyed the Cyklopen social center in Högdalen, south of Stockholm. Police believe the fires were set by the same people. Nazis published names and pictures of SAC members on their Info-14 web site last summer, in retaliation for the SAC's campaign against racism in workplaces across Sweden. Swedish Nazis organize the Salemfonden march the first Saturday of every December, northern Europe's largest Nazi manifestation.

The SAC has established a fund to aid members who suffer Nazi attacks, so that they can better support their members as they continue the fight against fascists in the workplace. (SAC International Committee, Stockholm)

### **SAC backs wildcat against casualization**

Workers in the warehouse for the Swedish state's alcohol monopoly held a wildcat strike in response to management attempts to replace the workforce with temporary workers. Management has been trying for a long time to replace the workers with casualized workers on short-term contracts, but now they are using the recession as an excuse for laying off workers, while they continue to hire agency staff. The workers have received little help or interest from their trade union; after a demonstration outside the LO (mainstream trade union federation) headquarters they were promised a meeting with LO representatives, but this was never fulfilled. The workers have refused to return to work and have been joined in their strike by supporters from the local branch of the SAC.

A June 17 blockade of the warehouse was successful between 5 a.m. until two in the afternoon when police helped managers sneak scabs in the back door. Police have taken the unusually hostile step of classifying the action as a demonstration rather than a workplace conflict, which gives them increased powers to harass the strikers. This is a tactic that is often used against

strikers from the syndicalist union SAC but is not typically used against workers from the LO trade unions.

### **Greece: Janitors' union leader attacked**

On Dec. 22 at around 12:10 a.m. Constantina Kuneva, the general secretary of the Janitors and Domestic Service Staff Union of Attiki, fell victim of a murderous attack by means of caustic acid while on her way back from work. She was hospitalized in critical condition in the intensive care unit of Evangelismos Hospital, suffering major damage to her eyes and face that resulted in the loss of sight in one eye. Constantina is a mother of a child, a worker, a syndicalist and an immigrant.

Constantina and the Janitors Union have been trying over the past few years to disclose everything hidden behind the sub-contracting of services, especially in the public sector. Every day small and big crimes occur, human rights are breached, human dignity violated, and no one knows. The minister, the hospital manager, the president of the institution – they do not care. But they breach all workers' rights; they do not pay our social service contribution, and therefore we never substantiate the right to pension; they do not pay us for the hours we work; they force us to sign blank papers with wages that they never paid; we sign when first hired for our redundancy of the future; they do not pay their contributions for our health-risky job; they threaten us with lay-offs and black lists. They organize yellow unions in order for us to be represented by staff managers and those obedient to the contractors.

We have been raising these issues to the Labor Inspection service, to the Social Security, to the highest trade union bodies. We have been trying by legal actions, as a group and individually. We ask for information regarding our working conditions and agreements and they claim that these are personal data! When we do manage, after many efforts, to reach the ministry's officials, in order to demand a change of the legal framework that permits mafia practices to prevail in public and private companies, they pretend not to understand, even when we reveal, in vain, to the ministers that the same practices occur in the sub-contracting of cleaning services in their very own ministry!

How is this possible? How can it be that within your ministry, in your hospital, in the HSAP (Athens' Metro) where Constantina worked, not even these semi-laws and regulations are followed, but instead you tolerate the black holes of the contractors? Their response is disarming! "We subcontract and pay the contractors for cleaning services. Who they employ, how do they work, it is their own business." Constantina stood face to face with this regime, and this is the reason they gave her such an appalling answer!

No measures have been taken yet to find the perpetrators of the attack. They would try once more to answer, "we do not care." But we will insist and we will pull down the curtain as many times as it takes in order to reveal everything they try to hide.

They tried to kill Constantina. AND WE DO CARE!

We call all the workers, Greeks and migrants, the youth that have taken the streets, every honest woman/man with dignity in solidarity and support. Let's reveal the moral and physical executors behind Constantina's assassination attempt.

Let's reveal all those that kill us every day, because all of us, Greeks and migrants, DO CARE!

Janitors and Domestic Service Staff Union of Attiki  
pekop1999@gmail.com, www.pekop.formyjob.net

### **Civil service general strike in Morocco**

Following the collapse of wage talks with the government, the Moroccan Workers' Union, the Democratic Workers' Organization and the Democratic Workers' Federation called civil service general strikes on January 23rd and again on February 10th.

Democratic Workers' Federation head Abderrahman Az-zouzi said that the negotiations could not be taken seriously, as the unions' proposals had been simply rejected. "We want to see salaries increase in line with the price rises over recent months. ... The increases announced thus far are insignificant compared with what is happening to Moroccans' purchasing power."

Workers called for an additional 20% rise in salaries. They also asked for one-off promotions and the removal of the bottom pay scales 1 to 4. The unions also demanded a special allowance for public servants in isolated areas. The government refuses to increase salaries or promote staff. Mohamed Abbou's ministerial office for the modernization of the public sector said the government will end the bottom pay scales by 2011. (Infoshop.org)

### **Nepalese Maoists to ban strikes**

Nepal's Maoist-led government has already passed legislation restricting workers' rights in the country's proposed Special Economic Zones, and is now proposing a national ban on strikes. This, they say, is necessary in order to attract foreign investment. Under the proposals, workers would be allowed to form unions, but would be prohibited from undertaking any action that affects production or normal industrial operations. In April, the Maoist finance minister assured Nepal's International Chamber of Commerce the government will ban street protests and strikes.

The Maoist regime did abolish debt-slavery in the countryside, but left the former slaves with no land or other means of income. Many of the freed slaves have had to resort to begging their former masters to take them back.

### **IWW recyclers win wage hike despite bosses' cry of economic crisis**

The Industrial Workers of the World has won a new agreement for Curbside recyclers employed by the Ecology Center under contract with the city of Berkeley, California. (These workers collect recyclables put out on the curb by city residents; the IWW also represents workers at the Center's drop-off Buyback program under a separate contract.) The IWW has represented Curbside and Buyback recycling workers there for many years, and despite the ostensibly "progressive" nature of the boss outfit, negotiations have always been difficult. This year the Ecology Center cried budget crisis, and said they would have to cut health benefits, but refused to provide details to support their claims.

After month of negotiations, the Center backed off demand for health care concessions and offered a 3 percent wage hike. The workers demanded an across-the-board raise in order to help reduce wage disparities; ultimately winning their demand when they announced they would strike Jan. 20 unless it was met.

IWW organizing continues at Starbucks, and the coffee giant continues to fire workers for union organizing and then settle with the National Labor Relations Board, evidently figuring its puny penalties are a small price to pay for unfettered union-busting.

The IWW has also launched a national organizing campaign among freight truckers, once one of the U.S.'s best-paid blue collar jobs, but increasingly characterized by sub-contracting, poverty

wages, and intolerable working conditions. There are also IWW campaigns underway among taxicab drivers, grocery store workers, and in the embattled nonprofit sector.

### **Northern Israel Rail workers wildcat**

Israel Railways workers in Haifa conducted a wildcat strike Feb. 5 in response to fraud charges against official union members, and replacement of workers not loyal to management. The wildcat is said to have been organized by an unofficial union committee. The official union committee has ceased functioning since the beginning of a probe by police fraud sections of its leaders.

Train travel was disrupted around Israel throughout the day, as Israel Railways claims it was “forced” to close all travel, not just to the north, due to safety reasons.

The Israeli Labor Court demanded that workers return to work after union representatives failed to appear to a hearing. Union members involved in planning the strike were called to the Histadrut (official labor “union”) Court to face disciplinary charges for conducting an unauthorized strike. (libcom.org)

### **Assassination of workers in Venezuela**

The anarchist organization El Libertario has joined a campaign launched by several Venezuelan unions to confront the hired killers that are killing labor activists.

On May 5 Argenis Vasquez, organizing secretary in the union at Toyota's plant in Cumana, was gunned down by thugs as he left his house. This assassination occurred just after a month-long strike demanding improvements. The murdered worker was a leader of the protest and key in confrontations with the company and the management. It all looks like the unofficial “answer” by a company unable to impose its will on the strikers.

This was not even three months since the deaths of workers Pedro Suarez and Javier Marcano in Anzoategui, in the eastern part of the country, during violent repression by the regional police ordered by Governor Tarek William Saab as they tried to evict workers from that other Japanese transnational Mitsubishi Motors. The workers were occupying the factory as protest against the firing of 135 workers and for their demands.

These killings come on top of the horrible assassination of the three main leaders of the Union Nacional de Trabajadores (UNT, National Workers Union) in the state of Aragua, at the hand of thugs who gunned them down November 27 in the vicinity of La Encrucijada. They were Richard Gallego, president of UNT's regional section, Luis Hernandez, union leader at Pepsi-Cola and Carlos Requena, union delegate at Produvisa, all members of political party Unidad Socialista de Izquierda –USI (Left Socialist Union). These labor leaders were at the head of the union in a state with one of the largest rates of labor conflict in the country, leading the struggle in solidarity with workers who occupied the Colombian transnational Lacteos Alpina due to threats of lock-down and facing harsh repression by the regional police (then under the direction of Governor Didalco Bolivar).

There have been six workers killed during the struggle in barely five months. In most cases we're talking about a policy of “Columbization” of labor conflicts: pay assassins to kill labor leaders and thus intimidate the working class and break up their organizations. Let's not forget that workers at Sanitarios de Maracai (in Aragua) have been the target of threats and selective prosecutions throughout the struggle, that the workers at Mit-

subishi Motors complained that a car in which some workers were traveling was shot up when they were engaged in an information campaign about the filming of the killing of the two Mitsubishi workers, and that in June 2008 Gloria Palomino, labor leader at fan manufacturer FM (Fundimeca) in Carabobo, was wounded by a bullet in her leg during a drive-by shooting while she was at the front of an occupation at the gates of the company demanding the enforcement of an order to rehire.

These killings (and attempts) of workers in struggle seem to define a method of conflict “resolution” in the midst of reigning impunity, since to date nobody responsible for the killings and attempts has been found, tried or condemned. On the contrary, there is a process to criminalize workers' protest, there are close to one hundred workers on trial or under orders to appear in front of tribunals for having taken part in protests.

Therefore the organizations and persons whose signatures appear below strongly condemn this situation, we loudly raise our voice in repudiation of the assassination of workers in struggle, by thugs paid by the bosses as well as by the official security forces, we protest against the rampant impunity and demand prosecution and exemplary punishment for those politically and intellectually responsible.

We are convinced that if these crimes go unpunished we slide dangerously towards a national situation of outlawing and silencing by force the workers' legitimate protest and struggle.

Enough deaths of workers for fighting for their rights!

We ... propose the formation of an Independent Investigative Commission, made up of workers' organizations, human rights organizations and relatives of the victims, with access to all the information and freedom to act on a real investigation of the whole problem!

We demand a stop to the prosecution of the workers on trial or under orders to present themselves to the tribunals for struggling for their rights!

We call for the widest coordination and mobilization of workers, students and human rights organizations, truly democratic intellectuals and artists to unite our efforts in a large national and international campaign against these crimes!

The statement was signed by dozens of labor unions, union officials, and other activists in Venezuela.

### **Venezuela: Terror in Perija**

The following article was originally published on Jan. 30 in *El Mundo*, a Caracas daily. Written by a member of the editorial collective of *El Libertario*, it calls attention to a bloody attack against these original inhabitants of the western part of the country.

The information glut regarding the referendum on the Constitutional Amendment (to take place on 2/15/09) has hidden serious events happening in the state of Zulia, in particular the Sierra of Perija. It is the dangerous situation the Yukpa people are living due to their attempt to recover their land.

Landowners in the cattle business have been taking these lands that they know are the historical property of the Wayúu, Bari and Yukpa peoples. The latter acted in 2008, occupying several haciendas to recover what was theirs; the state reacted by promising to pay the ranchers the value of the improvements as a way to compromise.

However, these payments haven't been made and due to the decrease in oil revenues it is doubtful they will be made. Because

of that, the ranchers have been applying pressure on the natives to expel them from the recovered haciendas. There are armed thugs everywhere and the Bolivarian National Guard (militarized police under the command of the central government) have attacked and intimidated those who support the indigenous cause, a situation that also affects those who perform transportation services who are now afraid to do so.

Yukpa chief Sabino Romero Izarra is in danger as threats rain on his head and we fear action by the paid assassins who a couple of years ago assassinated his centenary father. Human rights organizations such as Homo et Natura – led by well known anthropologist Lusbi Portillo – and the Network to Support Peace and Justice have mobilized. They have complained to the tribunals, where they obtained a very timid measure of protection because the Disip (political police) in charge of enforcing it, only shows up occasionally in the area.

Faced with this terrible situation, the state has acted as accomplice. Their position is no accident in an area where you can find Colombian FARC and ELN guerrillas, those displaced from Colombia who also impinge on the rights of the natives to their lands and to boot, mining transnational companies from Ireland, Brazil, Spain and Chile who have the government's blessing to extract coal in the most unhealthful and environmentally harmful way.

It is necessary to make this problem known to national and international public opinion to put a stop to the escalation by the landowners who, in their position of strength and with the complicity of the state seek to overwhelm the weaker sector. We likewise denounce the fact that indigenous rights and environmental activists are prohibited from traveling in the area due to the de facto state of siege imposed by the “revolutionary and Bolivarian” armed forces.

While the officialdom and the electoral opposition tear their clothes in a stupid campaign where one can only hear slogans for or against the indefinite presidential re-election with no in-depth discussion and shrouded in the cheapest legalese, these depressing events reveal the praxis of an authoritarian political model attenuated by oil revenue in which militarism runs rampant.

These are expressions of state terrorism with a clear trajectory that goes from the disappearances in the operational theaters of the sixties by graduates of the School of the Americas, to the Caracazo genocide and the massacres of Yumare, Cantaura, El Amparo, the “Amparitos” Llano Alto and Paragua. It is now happening in Sierra Perijá and the victims are the people trampled on by multinational corporations, ranchers and displaced people. It all happens during the mandate of a government and a legislature that claim to benefit native people.

[More info in the English section of *El Libertario's* web site, [www.nodo50.org](http://www.nodo50.org)]

### **Italy: General Strike against the crisis and the government**

A million and half workers, students and social movement activists filled the plazas and streets of Italian cities Dec. 12. The General Strike was a success. The fellow workers of the USI-AIT (Italian Syndicalist Union), who called for the general strike with its own platform, was present in the streets, at the side of the students, organizations of the anarchist and libertarian movements, and the rank-and-file unions (sindicatos de base).



While for the institutional left this strike was against the policies of the present Burlesconi government, with evident electoral interests, thousands of people, including students and workers, wanted to demonstrate that what isn't working is the very system of parties and corruption that has left the country in straits that are contributing to the fascistization of the country. The crisis in Italy has existed for years, and is not only economic but cultural and social as well. Understandably, in some small cities, the demonstrations began united with the majoritarian CGIL union federation; in larger cities there were two or more demonstrations.

The demonstrations of the USI-AIT, along with other social movements of “resistance,” were characterized by direct actions and acts of solidarity with the actions in Athens.

In Milan, large demonstrations organized by students and rank-and-file unions terminated at the Duomo Plaza (or the Cathedral), heart of the city. USI-AIT General Secretary Angelo Mule spoke at the rally there. Later the comrades, supported by the anarchist community of Milan, headed for the Plaza Fontana where they paid homage to the victims of the attentat of 12 December 1969, and fellow worker and USI-AIT militant Giuseppe Pinelli, who died in custody, “falling” from the window of the fourth floor police headquarters, later immortalized in the play “Accidental Death of an Anarchist” by Dario Fo.

In Tuscani, where the USI-AIT has been growing rapidly above all with the health and sanitation unions, our participation in the movement was important. In the city of Florence, capital of the region, four demonstrations were organized. The USI-AIT led its march with a banner of the regional intersectional organization, and ended with a sit-in in front of the Greek consulate. The Union Sindical Italiana was present in many other cities, such as Brescia, where continues the conflict for the readmission of seven workers fired from IKEA.

In Genoa, students, fellow workers of the USI, rank-and-file unions and anarchist collectives, concluded their demonstration occupying an overpass, while in Ancono the fellow workers of the USI and libertarians, left the demonstration and headed for the Greek commercial embassy. During the commemoration for Alexis, the youth murdered by a cop in Athens, the red and black banner, waved over the door of the embassy.

After many years this crisis can offer an opportunity to the non-institutional movements: students, anarchist/libertarian movement, anarcho-syndicalism and revolutionary syndicalism. The institutional left, authoritarian communist and social democrat, have no masks or means that can restore its credibility, and if this crisis is to have a non-authoritarian solution, it is only through the channels of self-management, solidarity and mutual aid that has characterized the history of the Peninsula in the first

decades of the 20th century in Italy.

### Spain: CNT takes on robber boss

Following the current fashion, José Velasco, the boss at magazine publisher Onis Comunicación, is using the economic crisis as an excuse to rob workers. The company is chaotically managed, so much so that suspension of wage payments is a speciality. Indeed, Onis was set up to take over titles from another of their publishing ventures which had similar problems, with similar attempts to cheat workers out of their pay.

Velasco and Co. are hoping the state will save them money by paying workers (part of) what they're owed from the Salary Guarantee Fund. They've shown no desire to negotiate a solution. Given this failure to negotiate, the Union of Graphic Arts, Communication and Events, affiliate of the CNT (Spanish IWA section), has declared an industrial dispute.

### Revolt in the Caribbean

On January 20th a general strike was declared on the Caribbean island of Guadeloupe over rising living costs, ending in early March with an agreement for a \$250 wage rise for all workers. Forty-seven unions, associations and political parties under the umbrella organization LKP (Committee against Extreme Exploitation – Lyiannaj Kont Pwofitasyon in Guadeloupean Creole French) brought all economic activity to a standstill.

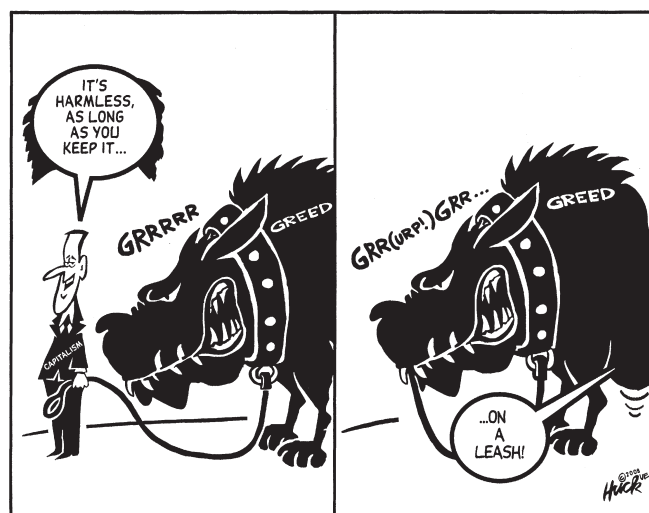
Although Guadeloupe is officially part of the French Republic, the traditional labor organizations in metropolitan France ignored the struggle and media coverage was rare and superficial.

The response of the Paris government was hostile, sending in the gendarmes and the notoriously brutal CRS riot police. Memories are still fresh in Guadeloupe of the 100 workers shot dead by the CRS during a demonstration in 1967. The leader of the LKP, Elie Domota, stated:

Today, given the number of gendarmes who have arrived in Guadeloupe armed to the teeth, the French state has chosen its natural path: to kill Guadeloupeans... Every time there have been demonstrations in Guadeloupe to demand pay rises, the response of the state has been repression.

Matters turned deadly as union activist Jacques Bino was killed in crossfire between youths on barricades and the police. The strike spread, with reports of riots on the French island of Martinique, 100 miles south of Guadeloupe, as well as on Réunion, a French territory in the Indian Ocean.

Talks between bosses and the union initially agreed a wage rise but the strike continued in protest against the spiralling prices on the island which are much higher than in the French mainland. The islands rely almost exclusively on imports sold in French-owned supermarkets. A packet of rice or pasta, for instance, costs 90 percent more than in the metropole. Petrol, too, is far more expensive than in France. Bosses at first refused to return to the negotiation table, but had to give in after 44 days of solid action by Guadeloupean workers. (from *Direct Action*)



### Duluth unions back protesters facing terror charges for demonstrating

The Duluth, Minn., Central Labor Body unanimously passed a resolution March 12 supporting eight activists arrested during the Republican National Convention and calling for the repeal of the state's Anti-Terrorism Act. The resolution notes: "a free society is one in which people can organize collectively to improve their lives without fear of persecution by their government; and

"Whereas, the labor movement has historically suffered state intimidation and repression in our efforts to organize working people, including the unconstitutional arrest of labor organizers and publishers of union papers under "criminal syndicalism" laws of the first half of the 20th century; and

"Whereas, changes to the Minnesota criminal code under the so-called Anti-Terrorism Act of 2002 threaten political speech by defining acts that 'further terrorism' so broadly as to encompass civil disobedience designed to 'disrupt or interfere with the lawful exercise, operation, or conduct of government, lawful commerce, or the right of lawful assembly,' including strikes, blockades and other union actions to defend workers' rights; and

"Whereas, the first criminal charges under this law were filed by Ramsey County prosecutors in September of 2008 against organizers of Republican National Convention protests in St. Paul (known as the "RNC 8"), with no evidence that the defendants committed any act of violence;

"Therefore, be it resolved that the Duluth Central Labor Body stands in solidarity with the RNC 8 and goes on record as opposing the politically-motivated terrorism charges filed against them; and

"Be it further resolved that the Duluth Central Labor Body goes on record as opposing 609.714 of the Minnesota criminal code ('Crimes Committed In Furtherance Of Terrorism')..."

# Factory occupations spread like wildfire

BY JOHN KALWAIC

Because of all the factory closures during this global depression (being referred to now as a recession), sit-down strikes and factory occupations are occurring all over the world. As the global economy spirals downward in what is a typical capitalist boom and bust cycle, many factories and other workplaces are closing. Bosses often try to cash in on the economy by putting together poorly run business, and then these business will go bust when the economy does. When the bosses' firm goes bankrupt they try to cut their losses and run at the expense of the workers.

Workers are resisting losing their jobs in the "bad economy" by having sit-down strikes or occupying the places where they work. This wave started with the United Electrical workers (UE) factory occupation of Republic Windows and Doors, in Chicago, which was the first sit-down strike the United States has seen in decades. The wave has now spread to other parts of the world. Here are some examples of workplace and factory occupations happening all over the world.

## **Kherson, Ukraine**

Workers at a harvesting machine building plant in Kherson, in southern Ukraine, have seized their workplace in a bid to keep it open. The owner of the plant was trying to close the plant in January, which sparked the occupation. The plant in Kherson is 120 years old; it has a rich history and is one of the oldest plants in Ukraine. The plant has changed hands many times since the fall of the Soviet Union and it continues to be in jeopardy. Factory management has a history of not paying its workers. In 2006 a worker at the factory hung himself because they had not paid his wages. The event provoked an angry reaction from the other workers who pressured the management into paying them. However, when the 300 workers seized the plant no wages had been paid since September 2008.

The main demands of the workers are, payment of wage arrears, (nearly 4.5 million Ukrainian hryvnias), nationalization of the plant without compensation to the owner, state-secured plant production and high-quality machinery. Workers say they will turn to more severe forms of protest if their demands are not met. The workers have elected a five-person Workers Council to negotiate with the bosses.

In late February, local officials transferred a large sum to the plant owner, but it appears that the funds did not reach the workers. On March 2, hundreds of workers occupied the ground floor of the building of the Kherson provincial state administration and provincial council building to demand their support in the dispute.

## **Poland: Thomson factory occupied**

Some 200 dismissed workers from a Thomson factory that produced TV glass screens and tubes are occupying the factory in Warsaw suburb of Piaseczno. Indian company Videocon had recently bought the Thomson factory in Piaseczno, and planned massive layoffs and restructuring at many of the factories they bought. Videocon was planning to move a lot of its factories and equipment to countries where labor is cheaper and to integrate its operation abroad with its operations in India.

The bosses at Videocon complained that wages "were too high" at the factory; from the very beginning Videocon did not get along with the Solidarity union by which the workers were represented. Videocon also demanded that the Polish government give the company money to keep the factory in Poland, much like governments of Mexico and Italy did to keep the Videocon factories in those countries. However, unlike the Italian and Mexican governments, the Polish government did not give the company money and that's when the layoffs started.

Two years ago 5,000 workers worked at the Thomson factory in Piaseczno, since Videocon bought the factory as many as 4,700 workers have been laid off. The company lowered the workers' salaries by 40 percent last summer and then demanded another 30% pay cut. This was despite the fact that Videocon was raking in profits after having huge orders from Russia and Turkey. Many people left voluntarily (under pressure from managers who wanted to avoid severance pay) or took pay cuts, but in the end the vast majority of workers were fired and 200 of the fired workers were not given their back pay and compensation of up to 15,000 Zolots or 3,500 Euros.

When these dismissed workers did not receive their money they occupied the Thomson factory demanding that the company pay them what was owed. The leadership of the "Solidarity" union, which represents the workers, tried to convince them to not occupy the factory, saying that the money the company owed them was being transferred to their accounts. However, due to the use of mobile internet phones the workers found out the claim made by the union leadership was false and continued with the occupation – saying that they are not leaving until they get what is owed them. Many of the workers were worried that the company would try to rip them off. Technically they worked for a company called Eagle, registered in the Cayman Islands, which Videocon now owns 80 percent of. If Eagle is not able to pay them Videocon may claim it's not their responsibility.

## **Ireland: Crystal factory occupied**

Workers at the Crystal factory, which produces glass in Waterford, Ireland, are occupying their factory after a decision to stop production and go into receivership. A decision was made by the receiver David Carson of Deloitte Ireland to make 480 of the factory's 670 workers redundant. The Unite union, which has been meeting with management, the receiver and the Irish government to work out a deal for the workers, has been working to find a new owner for the factory. The receiver claims that the halting of production is not permanent. The workers however were not satisfied and occupied the front lobby from Jan. 30 to March 22, when they accepted a settlement reinstating 110 workers to full-time jobs, and 50 to part-time positions.

## **Scotland: Prisme factory occupied**

Workers at the Prisme packaging plant in Dundee, Scotland, occupied their factory for 51 days, ending April 24 with an agreement to reopen the factory as a workers' cooperative. The new operation was set to open May 1. The workers occupied the plant after they were told it was being closed, and that they would not receive severance packages.

## Statement from the workers occupying Kherson Machinery

This is a translation of a statement issued by the worker's council occupying the Kherson Machinery Plant in Ukraine, as translated by Pat Murtagh on his blog, [mollymew.blogspot.com](http://mollymew.blogspot.com)

Workers of Ukraine!

The deeper Ukraine plunged into economic crisis, the more obvious it becomes that the authorities and big business have only one recipe for it. They are trying to shift all of its gravity on the shoulders of workers, the elderly and youth.

The growing prices of food and essential goods and the rising rates for housing and communal services, the uncontrollably rising prices of public transport, and the fact that medicines and medical care are becoming less and less affordable.

Rather than provide effective assistance to laid-off and unemployed people, officials and capitalists think only about how to enumerate them. Rather than do everything to preserve existing and create new jobs, the officials and owners of businesses behind the crisis pushed workers into the street.

As a result of these policies, the Kherson machinery factory faced a critical situation: production was stopped, salaries were not paid, and the company stopped all payments to the budget and the pension fund. Neither the owner nor the current government are taking any steps to revive the plant.

Under these conditions, the labor collective has decided not to give up and came together to fight for the interests of human labor. At this difficult crossroads we took decisive action: had a tough administration demonstration, captured and protected the plant against theft of finished products and equipment, and we are fighting for the truth about our struggle.

We demanded from the Government of Ukraine nationalization under the control of the working staff. We demanded the confiscation of the bank accounts of the owner of the plant, and the repayment of debts on wages, as well as payments to the budget and pension fund. We require the state to ensure the government orders and marketing of the plant products. We demanded repayment of debts on wages for all workers in the city of Kherson and full employment in the city and region.

We understand that we can achieve our demands only with the support of workers of other enterprises and institutions. Working groups of enterprises throughout Ukraine should join efforts and support each other in the fight. We should not hope for assistance in power of political parties, we depend first and foremost on ourselves and our fellow workers. The interests of workers can only be defended by the workers themselves!

We offer to coordinate our efforts, creating the Coordination Committee of struggling teams in Ukraine. This committee shall nominate a joint claim on behalf of workers in Ukraine and to coordinate joint actions to implement these requirements. We propose to put forward the following demands:

No cuts! Workers should not pay for the mistakes of the owners of factories and the authorities!

No bankruptcies and closures!

Nationalization of strategic factories and enterprises under the control of labor! In the first place where the owners cut jobs refuse to pay wages and destroy production.

The confiscation of the bank accounts of owners of factories,

and repayment of debts on wages, as well as payments to the budgets and pension funds.

Public provision of state orders and sales of products produced by factories. The state has had a multi-bank support; we demand that public funds not be parasitic financial structures, but provide jobs and support real production.

Repayment of debts on wages for all workers in Ukraine, raising wages to a decent standard, indexing according to inflation!

Full employment in the country!

We call on workers of all enterprises in Ukraine to jointly fight for the interests of employees, labor veterans and students! Create works councils and fighting trade unions. Together we will achieve victory.

Working Kherson engineering factory

## Collective bread

Workers at the San Andres (Argentina) dough maker, Disco de Oro, occupied their workplace Feb. 3. The bosses had brought the factory to bankruptcy by using it as collateral for their various financial and commercial machinations. In addition to these debts and the factory's utility debts, workers had gone without pay as well as social and medical insurance contributions for five months. To prevent the owners selling off machinery, the workers decided to occupy the plant to save it.

Disco de Oro has restarted production and now operates on an anti-authoritarian basis, without bureaucrats and bosses, as a workers' cooperative. All decisions are taken in a general assembly of workers.

From the outset, comrades in FORA (Argentine IWA section) have supported the occupying workers, joining the picket line, collecting money for the strike fund, initiating an international solidarity campaign, spreading information about the struggle among the population at large, and organizing, alongside the Disco de Oro workers, a solidarity festival. Featuring music, drama and films, the festival also heard messages of solidarity from IWA sections in France and Spain, as well as from Greek militants.

There was no real help from bureaucrats nor politicians. The official trade union tried to reconcile the workers with the bosses, while Trot parties loudly declared solidarity but fought to control the workers assembly.

(from *Direct Action*)



### Publications:

*Bakunin on The Capitalist System*. 15 pp., \$1.50. First English publication of this anarchist classic.

*Arguments for a 4-Hour Day*, by Jon Bekken. 16 pp., \$2.50. It's practical, it's necessary, it's long overdue.

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# Zombie Capitalism It's us or them...

BY JON BEKKEN

One in five U.S. workers are now either unemployed or forced into part-time jobs to get by, and the Economic Policy Institute expects that number to hit one in three by next year. Millions of homes are in foreclosure, and cities around the world bear the scars of half-built edifices, abandoned when financial markets collapsed in one or another of the financial crises that follow one another as relentlessly as the bosses plunder the wealth we create.

The government confirmed in December what everyone already knew – the United States is in a deep recession. The International Monetary Fund says the global economy is in the worst condition seen since World War II ended, and so they're rolling out lines of credit and restructuring plans to make sure the hard times last as long as possible. Some economists predict things will get much, much worse; others claim to see signs of a resurgent economy all around us, but admit that there won't be any wage growth or new jobs until next year at the earliest. (These economic booms often pass workers by entirely, flooding us in a sea of debt and rising prices while the bosses find innovative ways to profit off our misery.)

Already, some three trillion dollars of U.S. funds and credit lines have been extended to prop up this economic system; with hundreds of billions more coming from other governments around the world. Because of these massive infusions of social wealth, capitalists continue roaming the planet like zombies raised from the dead – looking for ever more victims to feed their insatiable demand for money to stave off financial collapse just a little bit longer. (In part in hopes that the economy will turn around, and the corpses can be revived; in part because as long as the zombie walks the earth, its top managers can pay themselves huge salaries and bonuses, preying on the corpses of their zombie companies, even as the zombies prey on us.)

Congressmen, economists and columnists in the *Wall Street Journal* and other business publications were openly speaking about the proliferation of “zombie banks” earlier this year. The Motley Fool investment web site warns of “zombie banks and zombie corporations that are artificially kept alive even though in any rational, natural world they should be dead. ... Repeated capital infusions into companies like Bank of America and Citigroup seem to be very good examples of the ravenous undead. And the infection is spreading...”<sup>1</sup>

Major capitalists agree. In April, financier George Soros warned of the danger that “zombie banks” could suck the lifeblood out of the economy.<sup>2</sup> Countless economists and other pundits have called on the politicians to kill the zombie banks, immediately, before the infection spreads. But the Obama administration, like the Bush administration before it, has taken a very different tack – shoveling cash into the gaping maws of these zombies, in hopes that they can be brought back to something resembling life.

Some of the country's largest banks are among the zombies, propped up by government regulators who have decided they are too big to suffer the fate of the hundreds of banks that have

been declared insolvent and liquidated. As usual, the disease is worst at the top. Only one of the major Wall Street investment banks survived the carnage intact – the others were liquidated (like Lehman Brothers) or swallowed up by other financial firms, often with backing from the U.S. Treasury.

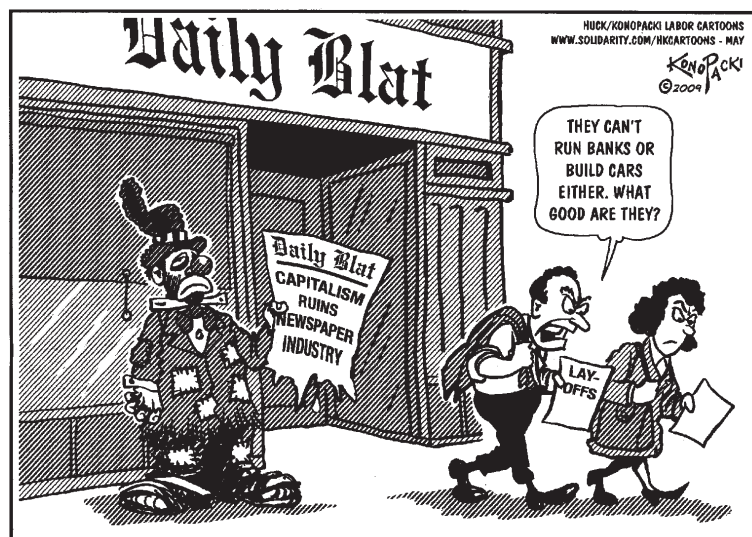
But the zombies are not limited to the banks. AIG insurance is barely able to hold onto its zombie existence. General Motors and Chrysler are in bankruptcy as I write, though plans are in the works to reanimate the corpses. Some \$8 trillion of “value” disappeared from the U.S. stock market in the early weeks of the financial collapse. Tens of trillions more have been lost on the value of “derivatives” and other financial instruments, home prices, and the like. More wealth vanished in a few weeks than was owned by 95 percent of the world's population combined. And although this “wealth” for the most part never actually existed, and certainly was never used to meet social needs, the costs of the financial collapse are being borne by those who never held it.

The problem is not simply zombie banks; we live in a zombie economy. The banks and mortgage companies have been making their profits sucking the lifeblood out of wage slaves desperately trying to grasp their piece of the “American Dream” by buying houses they could not afford, since speculators had driven the prices sky-high. On the other end were the vultures making their billions through payday loans and credit cards. Wages stagnated during the recent economic “boom,” and actually fell for millions of workers; forcing them to borrow heavily just to meet daily living expenses (let alone catastrophes such as a hospital stay).

Everywhere you look, the economy has been built not just on greed and exploitation (that is, of course, the essence of capitalism), but on ravenous, insatiable predation, destroying everything in its path in the quest for just a little more profit today. As these profits pile up, the speculation gets ever more brazen, as the capitalists are loathe to invest in productive capacity that might take months or even years to earn a profit. Looting is quicker, and easier.

If and when we climb out of this economic morasse, the foundations are being laid for predation on an even larger scale. Consolidation is the order of the day. Rather than socialize these criminal enterprises that have wrecked entire economies, and much of our living environment to boot, the government has decided they are too big to be allowed to fail, and is forcing mergers to make them even larger.<sup>3</sup> These enlarged companies will have more market power, and hence more capacity to wreak havoc.

Much like the mortgage and other financial speculation that fueled the financial conflagration, the recent consolidation binge resembles looting more than investing. Investment bank Bear Stearns was bought by JP Morgan Chase (the only surviving major investment bank) for less than its Manhattan skyscraper was worth. Merrill Lynch went to Bank of America at a fire sale price just days ahead of its own collapse. BofA, which bought Countrywide Financial – one of the country's largest mortgage servicers – at bargain basement prices is itself teetering on the edge of collapse. Other banks have used the government's cheap



loans, ostensibly meant to stimulate the economy, to buy up weaker banks, such as with PNC Financial's purchase of National City Bank.<sup>4</sup>

Twenty years ago, the five largest mortgage servicing firms (the companies that actually collect the payments and keep track of the loans for the majority of loans that are no longer held by the banks or other firms that issued them, but instead have been turned into derivatives and bonds and other financial instruments) controlled 7 percent of the industry. Today, the top three servicers (Bank of America, Wells Fargo, and Chase Manhattan) control 48 percent of the U.S.'s \$11.5 trillion in mortgages – one in eight of which are now delinquent or in foreclosure.<sup>5</sup>

Bank of America, Citigroup and Wells Fargo survive on the government dole – left to the “free market,” they would have been forced into bankruptcy months ago. Yet though the largest banks rely on public funds for their survival, their control rests entirely in the hands of the parasites whose looting created the crisis.

The bosses who managed the disaster are being recycled. Countrywide Financial is no more, its wreckage picked up by Bank of America. But a dozen former Countrywide executives are making millions buying up their bad mortgages from the government for pennies on the dollar, according to the March 4 *New York Times*. They restructure the loans to make them more affordable (easy to do, when you pay the FDIC \$43.2 million for a \$560 million mortgage portfolio, though the government will reportedly get a share of the profits) and then watch the checks roll in. Federal banking regulators say they need to work with “experienced” mortgage operators – perhaps following the same logic that leads banks to put bank robbers on the payroll.

This bailing out of capitalism is a very expensive proposition – so expensive that no one has been able to tally the depth of the hole they are trying to fill (some say \$10 trillion, some say much, much more), or to track just how much has already been spent. In addition to the three trillion or so paid out from the U.S. treasury, there have been cut-rate loans and loan guarantees of hundreds of billions of dollars to keep the zombie banks and other firms on their feet. Meanwhile, the United Nations estimates that it would cost \$195 billion to eradicate most poverty-related deaths in the world (from malaria, malnutrition, AIDS, and the like). So tens of millions of human lives could be saved for a tenth of what we have spent propping up the capitalists.

## An expensive system

Capitalism has been a very expensive project. It has made some people quite wealthy, but has reduced many more to misery far worse in absolute terms than they faced before four centuries of capitalist economic development. Half the world's population lives on \$2 a day or less. The planet is in deep crisis. One-third of all species face imminent extinction.

Life is hard under capitalism even in the good times. The World Bank conceded in a report released August 26, 2008, that 1.4 billion people lived in “extreme poverty” (which it defined as less than \$1.25 a day) in 2005, during what was billed as a global economic boom. The same day, the U.S. Census Bureau reported that the income of the typical American household rose in 2007 for the third year in a row. But median household income (half above, half below) remained 3.4 percent less than it had been in 2000. “What makes the news particularly bleak,” editorialized the *New York Times* (8/27/08), “is that last year was probably the best year of the economic expansion...” According to official definitions, which wildly understate the problem, one in eight Americans was living in poverty in this best of all economic boom years.

Government economists say the economy is bottoming out – they expect the recession to be over by Fall. But it will take much longer, they concede, for jobs to return. In the meantime, the government is doing everything it can to make sure the bosses survive the economic melt-down, while workers are hit as hard as possible. (We're used to hard times, after all; but losing their six figure salaries and bonuses would be a real hardship to folks used to having money.) Banks are being bailed out, but not workers' pensions or mortgages. Public service payrolls are being slashed even as the need for these services is greater than ever before. Real wages are falling nearly as fast as the unemployment rate is rising, but the government is focussed on the stock market.

Auto workers were forced to take deep concessions as a precondition for the bail-outs of General Motors and Chrysler, but the bosses' and bankers' “sacred contracts” remain largely intact. Under government majority ownership, the capitalists who ran these operations into the ground are being left in charge, and are ramming through restructuring plans that rely on shifting production to low-wage countries and closing factories badly needed to manufacture mass transit vehicles, renewable energy equipment, and the like. (Not that there are any plans to do such things.)

In the case of the auto companies, workers have been forced to take nearly worthless stock in exchange for health care and pension obligations to retirees. These workers have little to no control over the companies they ostensibly co-own with the government. The United Auto Workers traded contractual obligations for the automakers to pay retiree health care costs for company stock – 55 percent of Chrysler, somewhat less at General Motors. But, leaving aside the plummeting value of stock in these bankrupt operations, the government structured the terms to make sure the employee “owners” would get no control. The union and its members aren't allowed to vote the stock, get just one seat on the board of directors (and even he is barred from fighting for workers' interests over those of the share-holders), and the “value” of the stock is nowhere near enough to cover the costs of running the plan, which will inevitably go bankrupt.

Such arrangements are typical of ESOPs. At one of the pioneering operations, Weirton Steel, workers were allotted three

seats on the 13-member board (though they owned all the stock). Managers gave themselves healthy raises while running Weirton into the ground – ultimately laying off most of the workers and liquidating the ESOP in bankruptcy court.

Among the walking dead are many of the United States' leading media companies, including the publishers of daily newspapers in Baltimore, Chicago, Los Angeles, New York and Philadelphia. The New York Times Co. has sold (and leased back) its building, and is threatening to sell the *Boston Globe*. Many papers have been sold for almost nothing, several (including the Detroit dailies, which never recovered from their lock-out of union workers) have abandoned daily publication, others say they will close if workers do not give millions in concessions, and many more are on the brink of bankruptcy. The *San Diego Union-Tribune* (flagship of the Copley chain) was sold for the value of its real estate holdings; now one of the public employee unions whose pension funds were invested in the buy-out is demanding that the paper stop its vicious anti-union ravings. No one is listening, any more than the workers who legally owned Tribune Co. had any say in the operation of that media conglomerate before it went into bankruptcy. (CEO Sam Zell bought the company with \$90 million of his own money and some \$8 billion of borrowed money, much of it through an Employee Stock Ownership Plan against workers' pensions. But Zell controlled the company, even though it wasn't his money at stake, and drove it deep into the ground.)<sup>7</sup>

### Kill the Zombies

Perhaps it may be possible to patch this zombie economy back together for a few years, albeit at great expense. But ultimately, we can not afford to continue an economic system that depends on sucking the life blood from the planet and the people who

### French workers confront the crisis

Up to three million people hit the streets in France March 19 to protest the government's economic policies in response to the global crisis. Airports, trains, schools and public transport were disrupted by the mass demonstration – the second general strike in France in two months.

As unemployment soars past 2 million, unions are demanding that Prime Minister Sarkozy hike the minimum wage, increase taxes on the rich and scrap plans to cut public sector jobs. Sarkozy agreed to a package of social benefits worth 2.6 billion euros after a first day of mass protests brought a million people onto the streets January 29. But his right-wing government has ruled out any new social spending.

Seeking to deflect public anger, the government called on the MEDEF employers' federation to cap executive pay at firms that announce lay-offs. But the MEDEF rejected the suggestion.

Authorities also fear that a tough six-week strike on the French Caribbean island of Guadeloupe, which ended with a deal to raise wages, could embolden workers on the mainland.

This followed strikes and protests across France at the end of January. A million people took to the streets, with protests held in about 200 towns and cities. "We refuse to pay for the capitalist crisis," read one banner at a protest in the central city of Lyon. Another said: "The capitalist economy is sick... let's let it die."

France's eight national unions backed the strike, accusing the government and French companies of using the crisis as an excuse to lay off workers and cut costs.

*continued on page 46*

produce our society's vast wealth in order to sustain a handful of parasites. Yet the debate has focused entirely on how to get the zombie back on its feet. "Progressives" call for more regulation and a stronger social safety net as wages are slashed to make us more competitive; conservatives call for unleashing the terrors of the market.

The workers who seized the Republic Windows factory last year had a much better idea. We need to reject the capitalist logic that sees our survival as costs to be shunted aside, our lives and our planet as resources to be plundered, and measures our future in fiscal quarters. Now, when the economy is on the ropes, is not the time to be making concessions – it is time to be organizing and fighting for real change. It is time to be seizing our workplaces, building job control, winning shorter hours, dumping the bosses off our backs. Maintaining the current economic system is a luxury we can no longer afford.

*"The capitalist economy is sick, let's let it die."*

**Notes:** 1. Alyce Lomax, "The Zombie Apocalypse Will Eat Our Economy," *Motley Fool*, January 23, 2009. 2. "George Soros warns 'zombie' banks could suck lifeblood out of economy," *www.guardian.co.uk*, 7 April 2009. Countless similar examples could be cited. See, for example, Paul Krugman's Feb. 25 post at *nytimes.com*, "All the President's zombies," which concludes: "More and more, it looks as if we're headed for the decade of the living dead." 3. Eric Dash, "If It's Too Big to Fail, Is It Too Big to Exist?" *New York Times*, June 21, 2009. 4. The bankers say they can't afford to loan to poor people any more, and indeed Republicans have been claiming that policies aimed at making it easier for working-class people to buy homes led to the mortgage melt-down. However, several community development financial institutions lend to low-income buyers while maintaining healthy balance sheets. Daniel Gross, "A risk worth taking," *Newsweek*, Nov. 24, 2008.

5. Kai Wright, "More Mortgage Madness," *The Nation*, May 18, 2009, 11-17. The industry is so enmeshed in speculation and third-party dealing, Wright notes, that it is often impossible to determine who actually owns a loan, and so processors are obliged to generate fraudulent documents in order to foreclose on homes. 6. John Sanbonmatsu, "Why Capitalism Shouldn't Be Saved," *Tikkun*, May/June 2009, 21-25, 70-72.

7. Ironically, many of these operations would still be profitable despite the recession (which slashed the advertising revenues upon which they depend) were it not for the hundreds of millions in debt their owners took on as they built their empires on loans backed by profits to be realized in the sweet bye and bye. The vultures are circling the country's largest media chain, Gannett; although Gannett has a net indebtedness of "only" \$3.7 billion, speculators have taken out \$30.9 billion in credit default swaps, and so some stand to make a killing if the company goes into default. (Because of the way these are structured, the longer the company stays solvent the higher the payments to maintain the CDSs.) Most bondholders refused offers to trade in their bonds for higher-interest notes due four years later. "Bondholders are saying that they're hedged, and that they basically want the company to die." Although the company remains profitable on an operating basis, Moody's downgraded it to junk bond status in February. (Richard Morgan, "The default option," *The Deal Magazine*, June 19, 2009) In many cases, Morgan concludes, because of CDSs and similar instruments, creditors now can make more money if a borrower goes under than if it pays off its debts.

# Hierarchy, Collectivity & Nature

BY GRAHAM PURCHASE

All variants of anarchism exist in unified principled opposition to any or most forms of hierarchy. Anarchists universally assert that, individually and collectively, humans are most happy and productive within non-hierarchical or decentralized contexts, processes, associations or arrangements. Anarchism believes that some optimal combination of local autonomy and collective self-organization results in the most robust, just, natural, pleasant, ideal or rational way to organize economic, political and cultural life.

In opposition to hierarchical traditions, Peter Kropotkin (1842-1921) highlighted the existence, desirability and feasibility of human societies based upon federalism, aggregation, amalgamation and collaboration. His anarchism envisages non-territorial, non-centralized global networks and associations emerging from the interactive choices of autonomous individuals and locally self-organized and self-directed groupings. Kropotkin envisaged an advanced, ecologically integrated civilization premised upon the possibility and desirability of collective, inclusive and collaborative non-centralized, non-hierarchical and locally autonomous groupings self-networked or aggregated by globally accessible social, economic, informational and communication systems. Kropotkin's social anarchism involves the replacement of social hierarchies with economic and social networking. Autonomous organic communities self-organizing within city suburbs, extended neighborhoods and agro-industrial villages would be federated by non-centralized, locally and globally self-organized and self-

directed associations of interest, culture, trade and recreation.

Does the anarchist idea of fecundity, fairness or naturalness of decentralized self-organization in actual fact square with contemporary biological conceptions of natural order? Kropotkin was also a pioneering environmentalist and historically important scientist (in such fields as geomorphology-climatology and evolutionary biology). Let's examine Kropotkin's ideas on collectivity and hierarchy in evolutionary, developmental and ecological processes and systems.

Kropotkin argued throughout the 1890s that scientific findings strongly supported a non-hierarchical view of natural order and process. Kropotkin believed the origins, evolution and development of cells, complex many-celled organisms, intelligence, embryos, and animal and human societies resulted from the collaboration of locally autonomous elements working collectively together.

## Symbiotic origins and evolution of single-celled organisms

Kropotkin's more famous contemporaries such as Ernst Haeckel (who coined the word ecology) and August Weismann (founder of gene theory) thought of cells in terms of a cell-state. In contrast, Kropotkin's characterization of cellular evolution and process rejected centralist or competitive hierarchies. Kropotkin argued that cellular-evolution, organization and processes appeared to be symbiotic, cooperative, decentralized and federative:

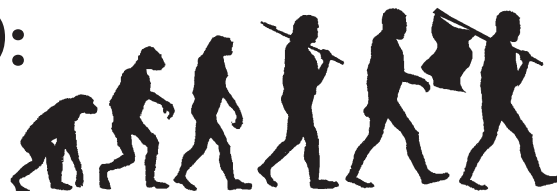
Each microscopic cell is a world of autonomous organisms,

## Darwinism after 150: Science, Mutual Aid & Freedom

By now, most readers will be aware that 2009 marks the 150th anniversary of the publication of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*, and the 200th anniversary of his birth.

*Origin of Species* is important not only as a scientific landmark, but also for the challenge it posed to traditional ways of thinking about a wide array of subjects. The book was quickly embraced by the workers' movement of its day, at least in part because the theory of evolution implicitly challenged notions of some sort of divinely determined natural order, and provided an example of a more rational, scientific approach that was readily accessible to a general audience.

The Darwinian revolution has transformed our understanding of the origins and development of life in all its varied forms, even if many Americans refuse to accept the overwhelming evidence before us. But the concept of evolution can be deployed in many different ways. So-called Social Darwinists paradoxically sought to use Darwin's theory to argue that social progress was impossible and that we were locked in a war of each against all for all eternity. Many still hold to such dogmas to this day. Anarchists such as Peter Kropotkin joined with geographers and other contemporary scientists to point to the central im-



portance of cooperation and mutual aid in the evolutionary process, and to show that the Social Darwinists' ideas were not only unacceptable from the standpoint of human liberty, but also demonstrably false in terms of their science.

Today, anti-rationalism is on the rise. Public schools across the United States refuse to teach evolution, or present it as but one school of thought among many (notably Biblical creation myths). Indeed, the Creationists have now opened a "museum" where schoolchildren are taken to view dioramas of dinosaurs gamboling about with our ancestors in the years leading up to Noah's flood. But even many who describe themselves as anarchists have embraced an array of anti-rational ideologies, from primitivism to "post-anarchism" to a resurgent nationalist consciousness that turns its back on the entire legacy of the anarchist struggle, and centuries of human experience. (We will examine this recent turn in a future issue.)

It is in this context that, to mark this anniversary, we turn to a re-examination of evolution, and of mutual aid's central role in the evolution of both species and societies.

each of which lives its own life, looks for well-being for itself and attains it by grouping and associating itself with others. Each cell is a cosmos of infinitely small ones. And in this complex world, the well being of the whole depends entirely on the sum of well being enjoyed by each of the least microscopic particles of organized matter. A whole revolution is thus produced in the philosophy of life.<sup>1</sup>

Kropotkin believed that scientific observations revealed how the earliest cells evolved and are still maintained by symbiotic and collective processes. Kropotkin's views on the collaborative origins and processes of cells wasn't based upon wishful thinking but upon the results obtained by micro-biologists in his own time whom he befriended (Marie Goldsmith), corresponded with (Patrick Geddes) or whose findings he summarized in his long-running popular science column in *The Nineteenth Century* magazine.

Discussing the evolution and physiology of animal and plant cells, Kropotkin argued that the organelles (bodies outside the nucleus, e.g. mitochondria, chloroplasts, cytoskeleton, etc.) are "independent" and "separate organisms" because, like the cell they "multiply only by subdivision." Kropotkin preferred Altman's characterization of the cell according to which the evolution and continuous functioning of the nucleus and cytoplasm are conceived as resulting from the economic cooperation of once free-living microbes:

As to the cell, it is not, in Altman's view, an elementary organism, but a *colony* of elementary organisms which group together according to certain rules of colonization. These granules, he maintains, are identical with microbes; their shape, their chemical reactions, their movements, and their secretory functions are similar; but the granules of the cytoplasm differ from bacteria in not being capable of a separate existence. They can only live in cells.<sup>2</sup>

### **Cellular Sense: Autonomy and collective intelligence**

Kropotkin, discussing the senses and intelligence of microorganisms, considers experiments upon amoeba and small marine invertebrates. The simplest organisms, he concludes, are discerning about their environment and diet. Unpleasant and pleasant meals were 'remembered' by the organism. After reviewing a number of experiments into the responses of marine invertebrates to warmth, light, narcotics, electricity, etc., Kropotkin concludes that, even at this level, organisms exhibit "discriminative powers" involving choice, memory, free-will and "some rudiments of reasoning." The brain and nervous system developed as an "unbroken continuum" from the sense and behavioral capacities of bacteria.<sup>3</sup>

Cells exhibit intelligence in the sense that they are able to integrate and interpret hundreds of different internal and external signals and respond intelligently to that information. Intelligence (though not of conscious variety) is a key element in cell evolution. Sophisticated forms of cognition have evolved many times over in separate animal groups. Intelligence didn't evolve through successive evolutionary steps such that insects, amphibians, reptiles and birds are extant examples of some linear-hierarchical progression towards more complex brains. This is most clearly illustrated by the collective intelligence practiced by social insects. Groups or circuits of neurons in brains appear to make collective decisions in roughly the same way as insect colonies revealing how intel-

ligence emerges from robust bottom-up patterns that utilize the interplay of individual or local autonomy and collectivity.

### **Mutualism and the evolution of many-celled organisms**

Kropotkin thought larger and more complex organisms evolved from two complimentary collective processes: Symbiosis and Mutualism. Mutualism refers to collective behavior between individuals of the *same species* (mutual-aid) or sister-cells within an organism. Symbiosis refers to intimate, long lasting or obligate physical relationships between cells or individuals of *different species* in the formation and maintenance of novel ecosystems and species (e.g. corals and reefs).

Kropotkin correctly concluded that symbiotic events and processes most plausibly accounted for the evolution and complexification of whole classes of organisms and ecosystems:

At the present time, we know that no animal or plant, with the exception of the lowest unicellular beings [bacteria], can be considered as one being — that each of them is a colony of multitude of micro-organisms. ...

All these are evidently but separate instances of a much more general fact, which only recently became known under the general name of 'symbiosis' and appears to have an immense signification in nature. Higher plants depend upon lower fungi and bacteria for the supply of that important part of their tissues, nitrogen. Lower fungi associate with unicellular algae to form that great division of the vegetable world, the lichens. More than a hundred different species of algae are already known to live in the tissues of other plants, and even in the tissues and the cells of animals, and to render each other mutual services. And so on. Associations of high and low organisms are discovered every day; and when their conditions of life are more closely examined, the whole cycle of life changes its aspect and acquires a much deeper signification.<sup>4</sup>

Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid* is without question one of the pivotal or axiomatic works in the historical and philosophical study of biological mutualism – cooperation among groups of individuals or cells of the same species or organism. Kropotkin thought that more complex forms of life emerged from a combination of his favorite political concepts of self-regulation, local autonomy, association, federation and cooperation. These processes occurring between (epigenetically) related specialized sister-cells (e.g. liver or brain cells) allowed for the evolution of larger and more sophisticated organisms:

Without solidarity of the individual with the species, the animal kingdom would never have developed or reached its present perfection. The most advanced being upon earth would still be one of those tiny specks swimming in the water and scarcely perceptible under a microscope. Would even this exist? For are not the earliest aggregations of cellules [colonies of unspecialized cells] themselves an instance of association in the struggle?<sup>5</sup>

When a physiologist speaks now of the life of a plant or of an animal, he sees an agglomeration, a colony of millions of separate individuals rather than a personality, one and indivisible. He speaks of a federation of digestive, sensual,

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perfection...*

nervous organs, all very intimately connected with one another, each feeling the consequence of the well-being or indisposition of each, but each living its own life. Each organ, each part of an organ in its turn is composed of *independent* cellules which associate to struggle against conditions unfavorable to their existence. The individual is quite a world of *federations*, a whole universe in itself. And in this world of aggregated beings the physiologist sees the *autonomous* cells of blood, of the tissues, of the nerve centres; he recognizes the millions of white corpuscles who wend their way to the parts of the body infected by microbes in order to give battle to the invaders.<sup>6</sup>

Complex organisms evolve when genomically similar cells perform different functions within a multi-cellular whole. Cell differentiation and memory combined with mutual aid facilitates the emergence of epigenetic systems of inheritance and development. Mutual aid without cell differentiation and memory can only produce a simple aggregation or colony of identical and undifferentiated though related cells. Multicellularity with differentiation allows for cell specialization. The evolution of cells for specific tasks enables organisms to acquire new abilities, undertake many tasks at the same time and occupy new niches. Some slime molds comprise of a single type or uniform cells. In others, cells differentiate into two or three types, including stalk-cells that, unlike those cells that become spores, don't reproduce. The specialized stalk cells of differentiating slime molds forego reproduction but help their genetically related sister cells pass on their genes.

Kropotkin thought local or individual autonomy combined with intense collectivity must also characterize the relationships within the egg and between the differing specialized cells of developing organisms. Embryos, he thought, must also develop and function in dynamically collective, decentralized, locally autonomous and non-hierarchical ways.

However, during and since Kropotkin's time it was generally assumed that genes and embryos necessarily express themselves hierarchically as hypothesized by Kropotkin's influential theoretical opponent Weismann, who formulated the Centralist Dogma of Genetics, Inheritance and Embryology. Weismann's linear, additive, preformist, nucleo-centrist, non-reversible, unidirectional, hierarchical and static notion of inheritance and development dominated genetic-developmental thinking until recently.

Weismann's basic idea is that there is an immortal blueprint centrally located and preserved unchanged in the nuclei of the sequestered egg cells preventing the transmission of acquired variation and controlling the process of development and inheritance in each and every generation. Weismann's static, mechanistic and hierarchical account of genetic inheritance and expression contradicted Kropotkin's locally autonomous and dynamically networked conception of natural process. Kropotkin believed that Weismann's gene-centric account of inheritance and development was insupportable because of abundant evidence of cytoplasmic-nucleus interaction in early embryological development. There is also the indisputable fact of cytoplasmic inheritance: "We learned from the best embryologists that the living substance which is the bearer of inheritance is not localized in the nucleus of the egg-cells; and that an intercourse of substances between the nucleus and the cell-plasm must be taken as proved."<sup>7</sup> Kropotkin also asked how it is possible for the nuclei of egg-cells to live a

"sleeping beauty existence" in an "inner sanctuary" when they are fed by and live in "close intercourse" with the body cells. An obvious case "in point," he correctly asserts, is the "many well-known cases of infection of the egg-cells by bacteria developed within the body-cells."<sup>8</sup>

More generally, Kropotkin objected to the centralization and hierarchy of Weismann's thesis, according to which nuclear information and processes determine the egg and embryological development in a one-way process: "There is a strong hierarchy among Weismann's determinants"; his conception of "development of the embryo reminds one of the mobilization of an army, of which the determinants are the officers and sub-officers organizing its different parts."<sup>9</sup> Kropotkin thought that Weismann's static and non-dynamic notion of 'immortal matter' and 'controlling determinants' were purely speculative and incorporated scientifically unjustified spiritual, capitalist and hierarchical prejudices and assumptions.

For Darwin the unit of evolution or natural selection was the individual. Weismann reformulated Darwin's ideas in terms of gene selection. Selection of individual organisms by the external environment is complemented by internal or within-individual environments or arenas characterized by competition between genes, cells and specialized cell lineages. Weismann's determinants are conceived as competing for success within individual cells that compete with other cells within organisms. The hypothesis that the evolution of organisms occurred through the natural selection of competing genes has more recently been popularized by Richard Dawkins in his famous book, *The Selfish Gene*.<sup>10</sup> Dawkins considers that the individual organism is simply a vehicle for replicating the competing and selfish genes within it.

Weismann's and Dawkins' conception of internal competition necessitates and implies centralized hierarchical control by the genes over developing organisms involving a one-way flow of power, information and instructions.

Centralized and hierarchical control is also an essential aspect of state-regulated capitalist competition in social and economic spheres. Genetic competition and hierarchy represents an imaginary or hypothetical biological counterpart of liberal economic science and politics according to which the state (centralized control of information, power and authority) and capitalism (individual competition) are necessary, essential and complementary causes of one another. Individual selfishness and competition generates efficiency, robustness, freedom, innovation, etc., in this view, but requires and generates a regulatory structure to moderate selfishness for the good of the economic system and social organization as a whole. The invisible hand of the free market requires the iron fist of anti-monopoly laws, anti-fraud squads, central banks and the World Trade Organization.

The idea that organisms evolved and are maintained by competition between genes and cells that are hierarchically controlled by some regulatory structure is counter-intuitive. Kropotkin believed that collective explanations of embryology were much more persuasive and that empirical evidence strongly supported them.

## Animal groups and collectives

In *Mutual Aid* Kropotkin responds to Huxley's myopic individualistic-competitive account of animal life. Kropotkin explicitly states in *Mutual Aid* that his study of sociability among

animals shouldn't in any way be considered an objective study. The existence, pervasiveness and importance of animal communalism and egalitarianism (e.g. collective mobbing or flocking by all the birds in a colony) were exaggerated for polemical purposes in his political journalism. Kropotkin suggested that the natural or predominant structure and mode of interaction among social animals is the cooperative and egalitarian group. In his *Obituary of Darwin* (1882) Kropotkin states that: "Darwin and his successors comprise an excellent argument to the effect that animal societies are best organized in the communist-anarchist manner."<sup>11</sup>

In *Mutual Aid* Kropotkin imaginatively reinterprets the ideas of his friend and colleague A.N. Severtsov. Severtsov was particularly interested in differences between individuals of the same group or species, e.g. age-hierarchies among social-eagles during feeding. Kropotkin when describing how older eagles are shown preference during feeding talks in terms of social "rules of propriety" rather than the more familiar hierarchical characterizations used by naturalists today. Similarly, necrophorous beetles whilst deciding whom shall lay their eggs upon the corpse of a bird are "considerate" and "not at all quarrelsome." Social contests for mates and territories among groups of birds are presented as play rather than competition. The animals are presenting a "dancing performance" to entertain themselves.<sup>12</sup> Such characterizations are designed to emphasize socially pleasurable aspects rather than social competition within animal groups. Kropotkin's assessment is no less valid or more anthropomorphic than the narrowly hierarchical and competitive interpretations of collective behavior favored by naturalists today.

Scientists broadly following the mutual aid tradition during the 20th century (e.g. Allee, Bonner, Wynne-Edwards) see social or group hierarchies as a universal feature of animal behavior and examine them empirically and theoretically in great detail. The role of hierarchies and territories in the collective allocation and conservation of resources is central to Edwards' theory that many ritualized contests, represent socially generated structured interactions for allocating and managing scarce economic resources (nest sites, food, cover, etc.) in a civilized manner for the overall good of the group and the species.<sup>13</sup> Without such mechanisms food may be come overtaxed or nesting sites overcrowded. More generally, innumerable and beautifully produced wildlife documentaries reveal how individuals within many groups of animals establish and defend their individual territories, nesting sites and mates through social competition. But these same individuals when faced by intruders and predators may immediately mount a general, unified and organized collective defense of themselves and/or their communal territory.

Although territories and hierarchies are structures produced by competition, they are collectively or socially generated. Unlike Huxley's individualistic anti-social conceptions of competitive struggle, hierarchical dominance or structuring is in fact collectively enacted or produced through the application of social rules or conventions particular to each species or group. Species-specific and group-specific rules of engagement or propriety inform, stratify and civilize in-group and inter-group economic and reproductive competition of many social animals.

Group or collective living creates dynamically structured arenas for *both* socially competitive and intensely cooperative and/or pleasurable forms of collective behavior in animal societ-

ies. As Kropotkin suggested, there is no doubt that egalitarian non-hierarchical economic cooperation is an ethologically and ecologically real dimension of both animal groups and living systems of all kinds. Pods of sharks and dolphins have been videoed performing distinct functions in a cooperative and coordinated rounding up and devouring of massive schools of sardines. In this example a non-hierarchical, egalitarian and economically mutually beneficial system of collective behavior is practiced between mortal natural enemies.

### Collective evolution of intelligence

Kropotkin thought intelligence is directly attributable to sociality resulting in much greater survival chances. "Intelligence is an eminently social faculty,"<sup>14</sup> and those species showing the "greatest development of sociability lead first of all to the better development of the mental faculties."<sup>15</sup> "Language, imitation and accumulated experiences are some of the many elements of growing intelligence of which the unsocial animal is deprived."<sup>16</sup>

Kropotkin was particularly interested in the adaptive plasticity of animal behavior in social groups. Social animals adaptively modify behavior and transmit through imitation, play or instruction knowledge to other members of their social group. Animals able to communicate and learn from information provided by others, Kropotkin thought, would be much better able to survive in changing or newly colonized environments. Intelligent animals compensate for their lack of genetic and morphological flexibility by instinctual or behavioral flexibility. The ability to adopt and evolve novel behavior is especially prevalent among highly social species. The collective transmission of information between organisms, both within and between generations, is an important and often overlooked factor in evolution.

Both Bakunin and Kropotkin thought that the hierarchical separation of brainwork and manual work in human society was based upon a false conception of the mind/body relationship. Kropotkin correctly maintained that brains functioned in a radically decentralized way in which every neuron is autonomous within a self-organized and infinitely plastic collective system:

The modern psychologist sees in a man a multitude of separate faculties, autonomous tendencies, equal among themselves, performing their functions independently balancing, opposing one another continually. Taken as a whole, man is nothing but a resultant, always changeable, of all his diverse faculties, of all his autonomous tendencies, of brain cells and nerve centers. All are related so closely to one another that they each react on all the others, but they lead their own life without being subordinated to a central organ—the soul.<sup>17</sup>

Brain systems are integrated with all bodily systems at all levels simultaneously as a unified organismal system. The skin is the largest organ of the body and is connected by a web of nerve cells over its entire surface area to a brain that is as equally influenced by bodily hormonal signals as it is by the electrical signals of the nervous systems. The development of meaning is social, collective and non-locatable in some organ called the mind. The responses of individual brain cells are only meaningful in the context of the entire nervous system and the behaving organism in which they are embedded.

Whilst attempting to discover some 'atlas' of the brain or mind (like a world map), scientists analyze brain slices of mice in

terms of which genes are activated in which geographical groups of epigenetically different brain cells. It is suggested that such methods will help to define thousands of different brain regions. In a normal functioning brain, specific regions may be the preferred residence for particular activities—but brain systems very quickly reorganize or reroute themselves when these regions are removed or preferred routes to them are blocked. Brain systems aren't composed of compartments or regions and don't function as regional federations, even as headless or non-hierarchical ones. Brain systems are not static, they are integrated functional systems existing in a much more dynamic, distributed and non-linear form than we have yet been able to conceptualize or model.

Experience generates specific modifications in brain structure, biochemistry and behavior. This specificity is achieved by biological malleability at the whole systems level, and not through a series of determinable mechanisms or processes that begin at some temporal-geographical point, either at the bottom or at the top of some molecular, bio-chemical-physiological, mental hierarchy of linear events, levels or processes. Indeterminacy and constant flux at level of neuron and its synaptic interconnections means that mental phenomena—consciousness, intelligence, memory—emerge as systems-level properties. The study of individual contributing components or the search for some determined process of neural change or reconstruction is looking for wholly inappropriate mechanisms at the entirely wrong level. Brain systems are autonomous, richly interconnected, non-locatable self-organizing emergences that can't be mapped like physical terrain. This is because the map and the terrain are in a constant state of self-organized flux. It is the recognition that the brain is not hard-wired that has led to the contemporary predominance of the concept of neuro-plasticity in both our explanations and medical treatment of mental phenomena and pathology.<sup>18</sup>

### Tall trees and entangled webs

The diverse web of life is genetically unified. Every human cell carries 60 percent of the same genes found in fruit flies and, nearly all of those possessed by mice. The complexity and fecundity of evolutionary and ecological intertwinement was perfectly captured by Darwin in his metaphor of the “entangled bank.” Kropotkin employed the term “integrated” to describe the non-hierarchical elements and lateral processes of natural systems and their evolution.

But despite these insights, life's development has generally been conceived hierarchically; analogous to an elevator or ladder such that biological history and process was most usually represented as an evolutionary tree pinnacled by intelligent vertebrates. The entirely discredited hypothesis that the ‘laws of nature’ inevitably resulted in humans, although rejected by professional biologists, remained a popular myth among the general public. But now these once widely held misconceptions associated with the idea of a single hierarchical evolutionary ‘Tree of Life’ have been supplemented and surpassed by a general ecological understanding or appreciation of the non-hierarchical interconnectivity of Life's Entangled Web.

### Collaborative origins of life

Life was necessarily premised or initiated by collaborative interaction of proteins, RNAs and metabolism within a membrane-bound chemical structure. Unrelated molecules became

entangled and then collaborated and integrated themselves with one another. The internal systems of membrane-bound metabolic-protein chemical structures hosted the complexification of RNA replicators resulting in the utilization of their informational and constructive potentialities in a synergetic partnership evolving into the first cells.

The hypothesis that solitary virus-like replicating elements of RNA or DNA spontaneously evolved and then began competing whilst hierarchically organizing the components of cells is an absurd, illogical and physically improbable scenario. Rather, life originated when molecules collectively formed web-like intelligence-networks of information, energy and meaning within integrated, replicating membrane-bounded structures.

The evolution of basic life forms (bacteria and archaea) with DNA information and replication systems didn't progress in some linear or tree-like fashion. Genes don't stay put, they have continuously traveled between and merged with many other species during the evolution of life. Reports in mainstream scientific journals during 2008 and 2009 suggest that genes were swapped or transferred between 80 percent of bacteria and archaea including taxonomically very distantly related species of these simple unicellular organisms.

The first oxygen respiring and photosynthetic unicellular organisms with a nucleus, such as amoeba and algae, evolved through the symbiotic merger of bacteria within larger and more complex cells.

Although evolution has been honed by natural selection the most important speciation, mega-mutation or complexification events during the first 3 billion years of evolutionary history emerged from entangled webs of migration, invasion, incorporation, collaboration, fusion and merger of both genes and whole species of differing single celled organisms.

These processes and events overturn and collectivize the traditional hierarchical-competitive tree of life conceptualization of evolution. Recent research suggests that 14 percent of living plant species evolved through the fusion of separate species by processes variously known as symbiosis and hybridization (*New Scientist*, Jan. 21 2009).

Bacterial infection of nuclear material appeared to Kropotkin to be both a fact and a potential source of evolution. It is now known that animal genes migrate laterally between species ferried by bacterial invasions and other vectors, resulting in genomic integration with the DNA of their new host. The parasitic *wolbachia* bacteria

has implanted itself inside the cells of 70 percent of the world's invertebrates coevolving with them. We've found at least one species where the parasite's entire genome has been absorbed and integrated into the host's. The host's genes actually hold the coding information for a completely separate species. Large-scale heritable gene transfers may allow species to acquire new genes and functions extremely quickly. Lateral gene transfer may happen much more frequently between bacteria and multicellular organisms than previously believed.<sup>19</sup>

The ancestors of cows didn't directly adapt their genomes to code for an ability to digest cellulose. Herbivorous dinosaurs and cows evolved through symbiotic amalgamations that directly integrated the necessary genomic information encoded inside bacteria that colonized their stomachs. In cattle the mother

“licks her calf, ensuring the continuity of her rumen ciliates.” Margulis continues: “The ‘standard’ neo-Darwinian evolutionary theory claims that cows evolved by ‘gradual accumulation of favorable mutations’ while it ignores the cellulytic activities of cow symbionts.”<sup>20</sup>

The role of symbiosis, amalgamation and collaboration in our own evolution is only just beginning to gain scientific attention. Like our brain and immune systems, human gut micro-ecosystems develop over a period of about two years beginning at birth. Our lower gut biota symbiotically assist humans digest much of what we eat and synthesize a variety of essential vitamins.

The entire sum of genetic material from microbial communities in the human lower gut alone is more than 60,000 genes — twice as many as are found in the human genome. The human micro-biome contains at least 1,000 different types of broadly beneficial bacteria that specifically collaborate and evolved with our species. The skin is the largest organ of the body with around 200 bacterial species. By some estimates only one out of every 10 cells in the body is human and a human micro-biome project has been conceived to aggregate data upon the DNA contained within our symbiotic bacterial and micro-fungi.

### Collectivity and genetic expression

For a century the dogma in genetics has been that, genes or protein-coding DNA located in the nucleus produce and transcribe messenger RNA, conceived as a passive signal that, upon arrival activates the cell's protein making units that manufacture the specified proteins that somehow achieve everything else in development. The ‘central dogma’ has predominated since the 1890s (when it was first conceptualized by Weismann) and was simply updated to accommodate new empirical discoveries in the 1940s and during the following half-century after DNA was discovered. But the central dogma — although in a general sense commonsensical — is rapidly being abandoned as a biological gospel because contemporary research into the RNA universe continues to reveal that, far from being a mere copyist or passive transmission signal, it is the case rather that an abundance of ribonucleotide episystems generated by the activities of a plethora of small versatile molecules are major players in embryogenesis through shaping, informing and interfering with the messaging processes that informs (not instructs) development.

Weismann's centralist dogma and hierarchical metaphors are being replaced<sup>21</sup> by Kropotkin-like characterizations of genomic expression and inheritance in terms of collective, fluid, multi-directional, self-regulating, decentralized emergent interacting networks or systems. The human genome contains some 1,000 types of microRNAs networking below and above the level of the DNA regulating some 30 percent of the protein encoding genes and performing diverse roles in developmental and biological processing ranging from tissue differentiation, apoptosis (cell-death), organ development and insulin secretion.

The expression and functioning of genomes and organisms is not the result of centralized DNA control and hierarchy because it involves the interpretation and coordination of that DNA by a wealth of locally autonomous and self-organized ribosomal (RNA) systems collectively and meaningfully integrating their activities in life's maintenance and reproduction.

### Collective meaning and the evolution of complex organisms and societies

The idea that ‘nature speaks’ is a biological fact, not just a pleasing metaphor. Collective semantic systems are everywhere that life exists; in all spheres, levels or dimensions from bio-molecular to social-ecological self-organization.<sup>21</sup> Semantic systems are seen in the codes used by molecules to speak to each other in organizing the type, place, timing and pattern of a cell's development in an embryo, pheromones or chemical signals are passed among groups of beetles, electrical and hormonal systems cooperate in creating meaning between neurons in the brain, vocal or gestured signals between members of a wolf pack.

Specific molecular response in the presence of a specific organic compounds or signals are one of the essential building blocks in the evolution of living cells because any system or *community of meaning* requires specificity, structural information and a means of communicating that information. These capabilities are all provided within the cell by signaling and receptor processes.

Internal and external cell signaling involves interpretation by signal transduction processes where large molecules interpret the meaning of any internal or incoming signal

according to collective rules in a specific context. These abilities possessed by individual cells were later evolved by a process of mutual aid into complex collective semantic systems coordinating different but epigenetically related specialized functional cells. The evolution of differentiation, adhesion and pattern codes in epigenesis involves the evolution of emergent systems of *meaningful* mutualist evolutionary complexification among cells in the construction of a new organism.

Organic or biological codes are collective systems tools that have facilitated the complexification, development and maintenance of life. Life at all levels has evolved and reconstructs itself, not only with informatic (DNA) and metabolic (energy) systems, but also, builds its structures aided by systems of natural conventions. Molecular, cellular, animal and linguistic communities share, follow or understand common or collective codes or conventions. Unlike information and energy *meaning* doesn't exist in any particular place. Community, group or collective semantic properties, processes and systems, whether practiced or utilized in the nucleus or the mind cannot be measured quantitatively.

Systems of collective meaning are convergent emergences appearing in many different levels of natural living systems—from epigenetic to social and linguistic systems of meaning. By giving meaning to information through systems of collective rules, semantic processes connect autonomous molecular worlds, independent cells and individual organisms.

Embryo development describes two distinct but related phenomena: cell memory and the collective memory matrix of the body plan. Cell or epigenetic memory is remarkable in that inheritance is highly stable and relatively error-free. This is necessary as the specialized cells that compose the liver or produce pancreatic insulin are continually replaced and must be reproduced very accurately over many generations during the life of an individual organism.

In addition to individual cell memories there is the collective

*The role of symbiosis, amalgamation and collaboration in our own evolution is only just beginning to gain scientific attention...*

or supra-cellular memory of the body of the whole organism. The supra-cellular or collective memory or body plan is the body's reconstructed memory. Body memory can be compared to the memory carried in the mind. This three-dimensional information is preserved in the body plan of the organism throughout its life.

The collective memory matrix of the body is not straightforwardly or simply a morphological product of the genes. The body is a self-assembled collective cellular state involving energetic, informational, structural and semantic input in a variety of forms from different sources — only one of which is the nuclear or genetic DNA.

The physio-chemical-spatial relationships between cells in multi-cellular organisms aren't in any way simply the result of genetic commands. Robust and convergent spatial order pre-exists in virtue of the fact that a large number of 'simples,' in this case cells, generate distinctive types of dynamic collective physical patterns, morphologies and architectures. The forms that plants and animals assume emerge from the distinctive properties that fields of interacting simples or cells collectively typically generate within given physical-chemical-spatial constraints. Regeneration is observed in simple single celled organisms when their nuclei are removed. This occurs because of the emergence and existence of robust autonomous and dynamic self-organizing physio-chemical-spatial systems contained in the cell-architecture. The robustness, predictability and dynamic plasticity of collective cellular fields or patterns are manipulated by genes and cells in a myriad of ways, but, their organization is autonomous and independent of them. Complex collective self-order comes for free and is independent of the biological systems that have evolved by manipulating and refining innate physical creativity.<sup>23</sup>

### Levels and hierarchies in nature

Net and web analogies have been extended to describe the technological ability of data in cyberspace to automatically route itself down one path or another in an evolving network when one or another route in the network is blocked or lost. Simple organisms such as pond hydra, lacking any kind of nerve centers, possess perfectly decentralized nerve nets. The headless hydra's nerve cells are directly connected to all the others and sensory information is eventually passed on to all others in the nerve network. The one dimensionality and lack of specificity in hydra's nervous system provides an example of a perfectly non-hierarchical and non-centralized integrated collective system, but one lacking in multi-dimensional complexity — neurologically analogous to crystals whose one dimensionality limits them to a single structure.

A diversity of organizational platforms, centers, specializations, levels, dimensions and spheres in ecological systems, organisms and brains is an essential element in the emergence of complexity. The nerve clusters of insects and the brains of more complex animals have, through the evolution of collective levels, centers and specialization of organizational function combined with, the non-centralized or generalized adoption of collective systems of rules of signaling, convention interpretation and action operating from the molecular to the social levels are able to facilitate the autonomy of local specificity and meaning within a vast integrated functioning whole.

Natural systems involve collective processes where autonomous elements organize their context, meaning and well-being

from the evolution, development and maintenance of complex self-referential integrated systems functioning at many different levels, dimensions and scales.

Natural systems don't generally develop or function as command hierarchies. But natural systems *do* often typically share the surface features of being multi-leveled, multi-dimensional and multi-scalar. Integrated, self-organized and interacting levels of natural systems aren't connected through linear or additive flows of command hierarchy. Natural systems are typically autonomous within each level or sphere of action. Rules or conventions of collective behavior and interaction observed at one level or context simply vanish in the next emergent level, or in a different scale (e.g. nano), dimension, time or place. Different dimensions or emergent levels or timings don't rule or govern all the others. Convergent systems are collectively self-constructed and self-maintaining. They are not constructed from above and cannot be reduced to the properties of their individual elements or constituent systems at the micro level. Systems exist in collectively constructed space.

Complexity in ecosystems comes from a diversity of dynamic interacting elements and organisms competing and cooperating for energy in its myriad of different forms, strategies and niches. Within organisms, complexity is increased through the collective evolution and diversification of new organizational levels, specialties or dimensions of energy, information, structure, memory and meaning. There are levels in organisms, brains and ecosystems, but these result from greater differentiation and collective complexity or integration — not from the appearance of a single, better, centralized or dominant form of organization within or rising above the system, controlling or eliminating local, pre-evolved, pre-developed or pre-conditional complexity and autonomy.

Natural systems emerge, integrate and operate in radically decentralized ways. Traditional hierarchical concepts of nature fit very awkwardly with both the structure and the concept of organisms and ecosystems in terms of both development and function. Military, monarchical, governmental and corporate metaphors are, for the most part, completely inappropriate in describing the operational processes of natural systems at many levels in different molecular, biological and ecological realms: genomes, organisms, brains, ecosystems, planetary climate systems, etc.

Scientific Reductionism is a reversal of religious hierarchy. According to Scientific Reductionism, systems functioned hierarchically but their organization was determined by simple micro-level mechanisms from below. It was thought that systems complexity might be explained when the natural laws of supposedly less complex lower-level mechanisms were fully understood. Nowadays it is appreciated that natural systems are not mechanistically determined but are emergent processes that cannot be reduced to their machine-like components at the micro, molecular, nano etc., level. Autonomous, complex, collective self-organization is present at all systems levels and emergent processes. The collective rules informing one level or scale of a system's organization are inapplicable at another. This is in contrast to hierarchical concepts that hypothesized universal divine or scientific laws that determine natural organization from the top downwards or bottom upwards.

When attempting to characterize natural systems without reference to God, law and authority, humans have struggled to

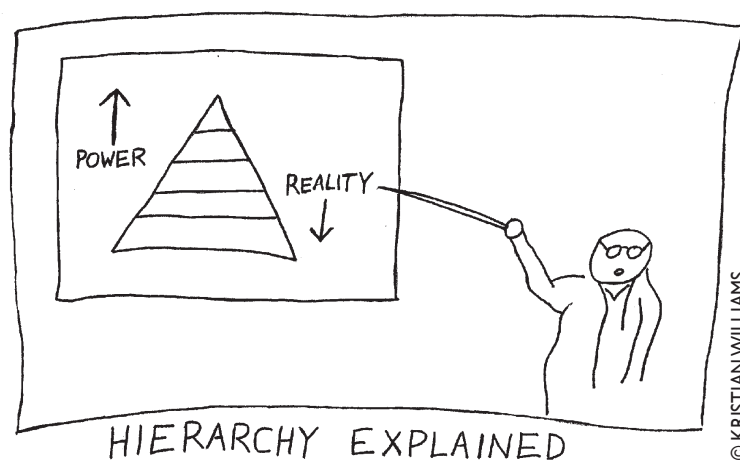
find words and ideas that capture the inclusive, collective and self-referential nature of multi-level, developmental and emergent systems. The holistic idea of the 'highest' level as being a particular state of a whole system is complicated by the almost complete autonomy of organization in the great diversity of matter, space and time scales in which systems exist. Turbulent water appears chaotic at the surface or macro level, but at the molecular or micro level it is robustly and dynamically organized. It is almost as if the two levels, scales or dimensions of the same reality were completely unrelated. Here we have the idea of systems composed of many different complex emergent systems in different scales or dimensions of time and space existing together. But each level, dimension or scale acts according to characteristic, particular and locally autonomous rules and correspondences.

Unlike the mono-structural simplicity of crystallographic order in which its essential completeness is restricted to a single static level of structure, living organisms and systems must be expressed in multiple levels and dimensions because no single level of structure contains the grounds for its own production or stability. DNA is not robust. It can achieve little by itself. It can only act and survive through mediated association with other equally complex and adaptable molecular realms and systems, the RNAs, proteins and the cell.

The nucleus or the brain does not control the individual cell or the whole body like the manager of a corporation. Talking about the biosphere being the highest level in some categorization of ecosystems is meaningless in the context of the real systems world. What was in the past characterized as higher or controlling levels or functions we now describe in terms of emergent collective properties. This does not refer to a governing structure in some way apart or above the rest of the system. In natural systems all levels possess complexity and are autonomously organized yet interact to construct inclusive collective structures. The problem with using the term hierarchy to describe integrated interdependent dimensions, levels or systems is that natural order is achieved through a whole system of fluid but convergent constructive relationships, in which the levels are mutually defining and co-evolving. Natural order is maintained through functional, meaningful and/or self-referential interactions between dimensions and levels. But no dimension or level has priority over the other. In natural systems, one integrated level is no more organizationally important than any other. Organizational participation rests with individual components and levels as much as it does within the entire system.

More complex systems emerge through the convergent interaction of other systems. These 'other' systems are usually referred to as sub systems or processes. These concepts convey subordination or automatic functioning and don't attribute to the composing or micro-level systems their full existential and organizational autonomy as full-bodied and complete systems.

Hierarchy implies the additive, linear and uni-directional organization of things. But natural systems are not things, reducible to the things of which they are composed. Natural systems are expressed as emergent interacting levels, with a common body of rules, behaviours and constraints at each level. Patterns of macro-evolution are not derivable from patterns of micro-evolution. The brain is not reducible to the bio-electrical-physiological processes of its individual neurons. Nature must be conceived as systems



beyond systems beyond systems.

Hierarchy implies not only levels of function, organization or composition but, additionally, levels that can be characterized as superior, higher, controlling, centralized, more evolved or complex. In the classical concept higher levels also create, construct, constrain, control or determine what happens at the lower levels. Hierarchies in human societies are associated with programmatic, centralized-corporate-statist, vertical or top-down command systems where subordinates follow the instructions of superiors. It is necessary to differentiate between levels, scales or dimensions of systems and hierarchical systems whose levels have evolved and are arranged to function hierarchically. Ecosystems, genomes and organisms characteristically interact with all layers of organization simultaneously such that they are in constant communication or co-activity through multi-directional patterns of local autonomy and global communication and interdependency.

Hierarchical characterizations are useful ways to describe natural systems in certain levels and contexts, particularly social hierarchies and territorialism in animal and human communities. This is because hierarchy is a socially generated practice dependent upon a complex community of meaning that the participants understand and to which they respond. But outside of the context of competitive social systems, hierarchical concepts are generally of only very limited validity when attempting to characterize the systems state in any level or context. Even then, not all animal societies are fiercely hierarchical. Bonobos aren't and chimps are. Both are our nearest living relatives. Among those animal societies that do have competitive hierarchical mechanisms, these may only be exercised at a specific season or in particular contexts. For example, on the Scottish moors grouse give up their hard-won territories during the summer months when food is plentiful. At any time of the year the presence of a golden eagle leads them to form flocks for safety and these occasionally contain a few hundred individuals.

Ecologists and biologists now characterize natural processes in more non-hierarchical terms, e.g. systems, networks, relationships, webs, communities, etc.

The systems concept is a collective concept. The social-scientific philosophies of atomistic reductionism and individualism didn't grasp that individuals or simples, even if they in some sense really exist, can't evolve into anything more complex by themselves. However, many similar individuals or forces and different sorts of them, by collectively following a few simple rules, achieve a

great deal. There are no elementary entities but a complexity of subatomic, atomic and molecular systems *relationships* in which many and various charges, particles, energies and tendencies relate to one another in a variety of ways. Subatomic systems are no more or less existent than ecosystems or human minds. This is because systems at whatever level are collective relationships that need not take up any space at all.

The inappropriateness of hierarchical metaphors is particularly apparent in the consideration of biospheric or global ecology. The top or most inclusive level is the biosphere within which all ecosystems are housed. However, the chemical composition and systems of the biosphere evolved and are maintained by bacterial processes that can equally well be viewed as the bottom, smallest or lowliest component of local ecosystems. Scientific knowledge and consideration of the role of microbiological life in the evolution and the maintenance of the biosphere and its local ecosystems reveals a situation that is not amenable to hierarchal interpretation or analysis.

The capture and metabolic processing of energy and biospheric elements by plants and animals occurs through the agency of their bacterially derived cell organelles and other resident micro-symbionts. Animals and plants don't contribute anything necessary to the maintenance or stability of biospheric processes at the planetary level — the immense super system maintained and regulated by bacterial processes.

The biosphere's local ecosystems need not be complex and were composed solely of micro-organisms for most of biological

evolution. Humans are a biologically inessential species of organism in the functioning of local ecosystems. Plants and animals are dependent upon certain quite specific biospheric parameters as the prospect of climate change is now revealing to us. Unlike bacteria that thrive miles underground and at the lips of volcanic ruptures in the deepest oceans, the natural range of our species exists upon just a few patches of arable land occupying the thinnest sliver of the earth's surface. Rather than being at the top of some ecological and evolutionary ladder humanity is waking up to the fact that we are hanging precariously somewhere off the side.

## Notes:

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*continued on page 47*

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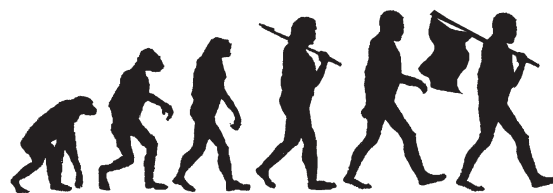
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# Mutual Aid:

## An introduction & evaluation



BY IAIN MCKAY

Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid* is usually, and rightly, called his masterpiece. While the high quality of all his work makes it hard to say whether this classic can be considered his best, it is fair to say that it is probably his most famous and one of his most widely read. Suffice to say, that it is rarely out of print testifies to its importance as well as the quality and timelessness of its message.

It is often called an anarchist classic. This is not entirely accurate. Yes, it is a classic and it was written by an anarchist, indeed the leading anarchist thinker of the time. However, it is not a book about anarchism. It is, first and foremost, a work of popular science, a “best-selling work,” which made cooperation “well known in lay society” while ensuring it would “be discussed among biologists in the following decades.”<sup>1</sup> It was aimed at rebutting the misuse of evolutionary theory to justify the *status quo*, but its synthesis of zoological, anthropological, historical and sociological data achieved far more and, consequently, its influence is great. “It is arguable that of all the books on cooperation written by biologists,” suggests Lee Alan Dugatkin, professor of evolutionary biology at the University of Louisville, “Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid* had the most profound affect on biologists, social scientists, and laymen alike.”<sup>2</sup> Anthropologist Ashley Montagu dedicated his book *Darwin, Competition and Cooperation*, to Kropotkin, stating it was a “classic” and “no book in the whole realm of evolutionary theories is more readable or more important, for it is *Mutual Aid* which provides the first thoroughly documented demonstration of the importance of cooperation as a factor in evolution.”<sup>3</sup>

This is not to say that anarchism plays no part in it nor that it holds nothing of interest for anarchists or anarchist theory. Far from it! The very mode of analysis, the looking into mutual aid tendencies of everyday life is inherently libertarian. It flows from the “bottom-up” and is rooted in popular history. More than that, it is documented with the skill of a talented scientist and, in this, it is somewhat unusual. It is often noted that Proudhon, the founding father of anarchism, was unique in being a socialist thinker who was also working class. In the case of Kropotkin, he was one of the few socialist thinkers who was a trained scientist, an extremely gifted one according to his peers. This education in the scientific method can be seen from all his work, but most obviously in *Mutual Aid*.

Given that this work is probably the best known by non-anarchists, it is useful to place it into the context of his revolutionary ideas as well as evaluating how well it has survived advances in science. By so doing, it will become clear why this book is considered so important by both anarchists and non-anarchists alike.

### Science and the dominant culture

Given that *Mutual Aid* was written in response to distortions of Darwin, it is somewhat ironic that Darwin was inspired to develop his theory of natural selection after reading Malthus's

infamous “*An Essay on the Principles of Population*” (it was, Darwin noted, “the doctrine of Malthus applied with manifold forces to the whole animal and vegetable kingdoms”<sup>4</sup>). This is because Malthus inflicted his “law of population” onto the world in response to the ideas of anarchist William Godwin and other social reformers.<sup>5</sup> That is, anarchism, indirectly, inspired the theory of evolution which, in turn, was used by Kropotkin to enrich anarchist theory.

Malthus's essay was an explicit attempt to prove that social stratification, and so the *status quo*, was a “law of nature” and that poverty was the fault of the poor themselves, not the fault of an unjust and authoritarian socio-economic system. As such, the “theory” was created with political goals in mind and as a weapon in the class struggle. As Kropotkin summarized, it was “pernicious” in its influence. It “summed up ideas already current in the minds of the wealth-possessing minority” and arose to combat the “ideas of equality and liberty” awakened by the French and American revolutions. Malthus asserted against Godwin “that no equality is possible; that the poverty of the many is not due to institutions, but is a natural law.” He “thus gave the rich a kind of scientific argument against the ideas of equality.” However, it was simply “a pseudo-scientific” assertion which reflected “the secret desires of the wealth-possessing classes” and not a scientific hypothesis. This was obvious as technology has ensured that Malthus's fears are groundless even though they are continually repeated.<sup>6</sup>

Significantly, starting with Malthus, all the “doomsday” prophets of the “population bomb” have been proved wrong time and time again. That the theory was fundamentally ideological in nature can be seen from Malthus himself. In contrast, and in direct contradiction to his population “theory,” as an economist Malthus was worried about the danger of *over-production* within a capitalist economy. This was driven by a desire to justify the existence of the aristocratic landlord class, which had been subject to much scorn by Adam Smith, David Ricardo and their followers as little more than parasitic consumers of the products of the industrious classes (capitalists and workers). For Malthus, the landlord class provided the great public service of maintaining aggregate demand in the face of any deficits caused by capitalist savings (which may not immediately translate into investment buying). So, ironically, his economics was completely at odds with his arguments about population – in one the danger is under-production while in the other it is overproduction. Anticipating certain themes of Keynes, Malthus argued that effective demand had to be bolstered and even went so far as to argue for the poor to be employed in building roads and public works! No mention of “excess” population there, which indicates well the ideological nature of his over-population theory. It comes as no surprise that his economics writings fell into obscurity.<sup>7</sup>

So it is easy to explain the support Malthus and his assertions got in spite of the lack of empirical evidence<sup>8</sup> and the self-

contradictory utterances of its inventor. Its utility in providing a justification for the inhuman miseries inflicted upon the British working class by “its” ruling class of aristocrats and industrialists was the only reason why it was given the time of day (“it provided the British ruling class with an argument against social reform.”<sup>9</sup>). That the population myth, like “genetic” justifications for race-, class- and gender-based oppression, keeps appearing over and over again, even after extensive evidence has disproved it, indicates its usefulness to the ideological guardians of the establishment.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, given its roots, “*natural selection*,” particularly in the form of what became known as Social Darwinism, was also seized upon to use against working class people and social reform as well as to justify elite rule. Thus 19<sup>th</sup> century capitalist John D. Rockefeller asserted that the “growth of large business is merely a survival of the fittest. ... It is merely the working-out of a law of nature and a law of God.” Another, Andrew Carnegie, proclaimed that while the law of natural selection may be sometimes hard for the individual, it is best for the race, because it insures the survival of the fittest in every department. We accept and welcome, therefore, as conditions to which we must accommodate ourselves, great inequality of environment, the concentration of wealth, business, industrial and commercial, in the hands of a few, and the law of competition between these, as being not only beneficial, but essential for the future progress of the race.<sup>10</sup>



Peter Kropotkin

And who can protest against God's law or rebel against Nature?

Noted scientist Stephen Jay Gould was right to criticize: the myth that science is itself an objective enterprise, done properly only when scientists can shuck the constraints of their culture and view the world as it really is. ... Scientists needn't become explicit apologists for their class or culture in order to reflect these pervasive aspects of life.

Recognizing this obvious fact suggests that science “must be understood as a social phenomenon, a gutsy, human enterprise, not the work of robots programmed to collect pure information” and so science, “since people must do it, is a socially embedded activity.” Even facts are “not pure and unsullied bits of information” as “culture also influences what we see and how we see it. Theories, moreover, are not inexorable inductions from facts. The most creative theories are often imaginative visions imposed upon facts; the source of imagination is also strongly cultural.” Science

cannot escape its curious dialectic. Embedded in surrounding culture, it can, nonetheless, be a powerful agent for questioning and even overturning assumptions that nurture it. ... Scientists can struggle to identify the cultural assumptions of their trade and to ask how answers might be formulated under different assertions. Scientists can propose creative theories that force startled colleges to confront unquestioned procedures.<sup>11</sup>

Kropotkin's work must be seen in this light, as an attempt to refute, with hard evidence, the cultural assumptions at the heart of the Darwinism of his day. In its most extreme form, this became “Social Darwinism,” which (like much of sociobiology today) proceeds by first projecting the dominant ideas of cur-

rent society onto nature (often unconsciously, so that scientists mistakenly consider the ideas in question as both “normal” and “natural”).<sup>12</sup> Anarchist Murray Bookchin referred to this as “the subtle projection of historically conditioned human values” onto nature rather than “scientific objectivity.” Then the theories of nature produced in this manner are transferred back onto society and history, being used to “prove” that the principles of capitalism (hierarchy, authority, competition, etc.) are eternal laws, which are then appealed to as a justification for the status quo! “What this procedure does accomplish,” noted Bookchin,

is reinforce human social hierarchies by justifying the command of men and women as innate features of the ‘natural order.’ Human domination is thereby transcribed into the genetic code as biologically immutable.<sup>13</sup>

Amazingly, there are many supposedly intelligent people who take this sleight-of-hand seriously. Kropotkin was not one of them and, significantly, he was not alone in this. He was representing the commonplace evolutionary ideas of Russian science.

### Darwin without Malthus

While *Mutual Aid* was provoked by Huxley's 1888 article, Kropotkin's interest in evolutionary theory predated both it and, significantly, his anarchism by decades. He recounts in his memoirs how Darwin's work had “revolutionized all biological sciences” when it was published and how “a thorough knowledge of the natural sciences and familiarity with their methods must lie at the foundation” of any studies undertaken.<sup>14</sup>

As an anarchist, Kropotkin first wrote about Darwin to mark his death in 1882. In the anarchist weekly *Le Révolté*, Darwin was praised for showing that species were mutable and evolution resulted from the struggle for existence, so making a profound contribution to the spirit of “criticism and demolition” that promised to explode the religious and social fallacies of the age. While the bourgeoisie had attempted to use this theory against socialism, the opposite was the case as others “applying his methods and developing his ideas” had shown that it were the “sociable species” that “prosper, develop and reproduce ... Solidarity and joint labor – this is what supports species in the struggle to maintain their existence against the hostile forces of nature.” Thus Darwinism comprises “an excellent argument to the effect that animal societies are best organized in the communist-anarchist manner.”<sup>15</sup>

The unnamed others in this article were the Russian naturalists, for, as historian of science Daniel P. Todes has shown, in the nineteenth century “mutual aid remained an uncontroversial element in Russian evolutionary thought.” In the 1860s, for example, Nikolai D. Nozhin “argued that intraspecific relations were normally characterized, not by competition, but by mutual aid.” Leading Russian zoologist K.F. Kessler, in a lecture given in 1879, “transformed a widespread sentiment into a coherent intellectual tradition.” Significantly, “his theory of mutual aid was not based on a benign vision of natural relations in general or of intraspecific relations in particular.” Kropotkin was simply “the most famous heir to Kessler's legacy” and “brought a Russian intellectual tradition into contact with a quite different English one,” simply elaborating “what for many Russians was commonsensical.”<sup>16</sup>

Todes shows how Darwin's ideas on natural selection found a welcome home in Russian intellectual and scientific circles

but his Malthusian assumptions were seen for what they were, a product of his society and “the unsurprising fact that he shared the ideological outlook of his class, circle, and family. This outlook was not universal, and a reader ... who did not share it ... might easily identify the author’s ideological preconceptions as bourgeois, Malthusian, or, perhaps, typically British.”<sup>17</sup> In other words, these Russian scientists and commentators (both radical and conservative) quickly perceived what it has taken modern historians so long to recognize, namely that notwithstanding his important scientific claims and evidence, Darwin’s metaphors and language reflected the social values of his time. That is, much of what passed for “objective science” was little more than transferring the characteristics of 19<sup>th</sup> century British capitalism onto nature.<sup>18</sup>

Stephen Jay Gould notes the impact of Todes original 1987 article on him.<sup>19</sup> Before reading it, he viewed Kropotkin as daftly idiosyncratic, if undeniably well meaning. He is always so presented in standard courses on evolutionary biology – as one of those soft and woolly thinkers who let hope and sentimentality get in the way of analytic toughness and a willingness to accept nature as she is, warts and all.

However, he discovered that “the parochiality had been mine in my ignorance of Russian evolutionary thought, not Kropotkin’s in his isolation in England.” Kropotkin “was part of a mainstream flowing in an unfamiliar direction, not an isolated little arroyo.” His work, in fact, represented “a standard, well-developed Russian critique of Darwin, based on interesting reasons and coherent national traditions.” Gould noted that decades after *Mutual Aid* was published, the “ideas of this school are unknown to us.”<sup>20</sup>

Kropotkin, like the others in this tradition, pointed to ideas and arguments that Darwin himself had developed, particularly in his later work. So as well as providing substantial empirical evidence, Kropotkin “quite rightly [also] referred ... to evidence provided by Darwin in *The Descent of Man* ... in further support of his doctrine.”<sup>21</sup> For example, Darwin argued that cooperation conferred an advantage on individuals and, therefore, on a group as a whole.<sup>22</sup> This means that a Darwinism without Malthus could be found in Darwin’s work, building upon such insights as “[t]hose communities, which included the greatest number of the most sympathetic members, would flourish best and rear the greatest number of offspring.”<sup>23</sup> So Kropotkin was correct when he explained to fellow anarchist and biologist Marie Goldsmith that he sought to demonstrate “that Mutual Aid does not contradict Darwinism, if natural selection is understood in the proper manner.”<sup>24</sup>

In summary, then, Kropotkin’s views “were but one expression of a broad current in Russian evolutionary thought that pre-dated, indeed encouraged, his work on the subject and was no means confined to leftist thinkers.” Significantly, he “first questioned Darwin’s approach to the struggle for existence while exploring Siberia as a youth and was an accomplished and celebrated naturalist before his political views crystallized. Furthermore ... his ideas about cooperation in nature were quite common among Russian naturalists of varying political perspectives.” Given this, Kropotkin’s work “cannot be dismissed as the idiosyncratic product of an anarchist dabbling in biology.”<sup>25</sup> Rather, they were the product of a trained scientist using his considerable skills to refute the cultural assumptions which marred an otherwise

ground-breaking contribution to science and human knowledge. In this he was extremely successful as will be seen.

## Modern Science and Mutual Aid

Kropotkin was always keen to situate anarchism within the trends of science (one of his best essays was called “Modern Science and Anarchism”). As such, it is only fitting to see how the themes and ideas in *Mutual Aid* have fared. Terminology aside, they have stood the test of time and are now standard positions in evolutionary theory, biology and anthropology. There is overwhelming evidence to corroborate Kropotkin’s thesis, so much so it is nearly impossible to document it. Sadly, it is likely that, in spite of his evidence-free assertions and speculations being refuted, Huxley will still be considered the “hard-headed scientist” while Kropotkin’s well-documented critique will be dismissed as “politically driven wishful-thinking.”

As regards evolutionary theory, Stephen Jay Gould concluded that “Kropotkin’s basic argument is correct. Struggle does occur in many modes, and some lead to cooperation among members of a species as the best pathway to advantage for individuals.”<sup>26</sup> Lee Alan Dugatkin has documented in great detail such behavior in his work, including his *Cooperation Among Animals: An Evolutionary Perspective*. Dugatkin has also traced the history of evolutionary explanations of cooperation and altruism, including Kropotkin’s, in his book *The Altruism Equation*.<sup>27</sup> Leading primatologist Frans de Waal writes that Kropotkin “rightly noted that many animals survive not through struggle, but through mutual aid”<sup>28</sup> and documents such activity in his book *Good Natured*.<sup>29</sup> With Jessica C. Flack, he argues that Kropotkin is part of a wider tradition in which the view has been that animals assist each other precisely because by doing so they achieve long term, collective benefits of greater value than the short term benefits derived from straightforward competition. Kropotkin specifically adhered to a view in which organisms struggle not necessarily against each other, but collectively against their environments. ...

[The] basic tenet of [Kropotkin’s] ideas was on the mark. Almost seventy years later, in an article entitled ‘The Evolution of Reciprocal Altruism,’ Trivers refined the concepts Kropotkin advanced and explained how cooperation and, more importantly, a system of reciprocity (called ‘reciprocal altruism’ by Trivers) could have evolved.<sup>30</sup>

Thus, as one biologist notes, “Kropotkin’s ideas, though unorthodox, were scientifically respectable, and indeed the contention that mutual aid can be a means of increasing fitness had become a standard part of modern sociobiology.”<sup>31</sup>

Robert Trivers’ original 1971 paper showed that “under certain conditions natural selection favours these altruistic behaviors because in the long run they benefit the organism performing them.” This applied as much to humans as to other animals, with Trivers suggesting that while there was

no direct evidence regarding the degree of reciprocal altruism practised during human evolution nor its genetic basis today, but given the universal and nearly daily practice of reciprocal altruism among humans today, it is reasonable to assume that it has been an important factor in recent hu-

*Darwin’s profound contribution to the spirit of “criticism and demolition” promised to explode the religious and social fallacies of the age...*

man evolution and that the underlying emotional dispositions affecting altruistic behavior have important genetic components.<sup>32</sup>

Trivers did not mention Kropotkin, but he later recounted that he learned from exchanges with Soviet bloc scientists that “in their literature, Peter Kropotkin was an early pioneer whom they would have expected me to cite.”<sup>33</sup> However, he seemed to have developed his theory independently for, in a 1992 interview, he mentioned that people “keep asking about Kropotkin. You know, I have never read the anthropologists who write about reciprocity, and I never read Kropotkin.”<sup>34</sup> He also notes that a

“very agreeable feature of my reciprocal altruism, which I had not anticipated in advance, was that a sense of justice or fairness seemed a natural consequence of selection for reciprocal altruism. That is, you could easily imagine that sense of fairness would evolve as a way of regulating reciprocal tendencies.”<sup>35</sup> If Trivers had consulted Kropotkin, he would have discovered that his unanticipated feature had been anticipated in *Mutual Aid* decades previously:

Moreover, it is evident that life in societies would be utterly impossible without a corresponding development of social feelings, and, especially, of a certain collective sense of justice growing to become a habit... And feelings of justice develop, more or less, with all gregarious animals.<sup>36</sup>

As de Waal argues, the “fairness principle” in humans has evolved and is “part of our background as cooperative primates.” It has reached the point of

declaring inequity a bad thing in general. ... If the goal is to maintain cooperative relationships by ensuring payoffs for everybody, hence a widespread motivation to participate in joint efforts, the evolution of the fairness principle is really not that hard to explain. The parallels between human and animal responses to inequity seem to tell this story.<sup>37</sup>

Richard Dawkins, in his much-discussed introduction to modern biology, *The Selfish Gene*, presents arguments why cooperation serves an evolutionary purpose. In the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition, he acknowledged that the title could be misleading and argued that “if anything, it devotes more attention to altruism” than selfishness. This is because “gene selfishness can translate itself into individual altruism.” As Dawkins stresses, the selfish gene does not exclude, and in fact can encourage, what he calls “mutualistic cooperation” or the “evolution of associations of mutual benefit.”<sup>38</sup>

This hopeful conclusion is based on Trivers’ work, which Dawkins summarizes in chapter 10. He later expanded on this in a chapter added to the book’s second edition (entitled “Nice guys finish first”). Theoretically, it is based on game theory and the Prisoners’ Dilemma where two people are arrested for a crime that they did commit but there is not enough evidence to convict them. They are separated, then asked to inform on the other person in exchange for no sentence and are given no chance to communicate. If both inform, then they implicate each other. If both remain silent then they are released. In this situation, the “selfish” action (inform on your partner) is actually the worse one. If you assume this dilemma is repeated with the knowledge

of what the other person did last time, then an interesting thing develops – cooperation becomes the most sensible action. Political scientist Robert Axelrod conducted research by creating computer simulations to investigate which evolutionary strategies were best, cooperative or competitive.<sup>39</sup> Dawkins notes that this work took “the idea of reciprocal altruism on in exciting new directions.”<sup>40</sup> The results support Kropotkin’s position that cooperation is beneficial.

The first tournament Axelrod organized attracted 15 strategies, of which eight were cooperative (or nice). The winning strategy was named “Tit for Tat” and worked by cooperating by default and subsequently repeat (reciprocate) what the other player did on the previous move (i.e., never be the first to defect and retaliate against selfish behavior). Significantly, the eight cooperative strategies were also the top ones, with the selfish ones trailing well behind. Axelrod published the results of the first tournament and organized another. This attracted 63 strategies and, again, “Tit for Tat” won. Again, cooperative strategies did significantly better than the selfish ones (all but one of the top 15 strategies were nice and all but one of the bottom 15 nasty). Finally, Axelrod conducted another (more ecological) tournament using the same strategies submitted for the second one but instead of points the strategies received “offspring” (i.e., the prevalence of each type of strategy in each round was determined by that strategy’s success in the previous round). Yet again, “nice” strategies quickly flourished and came to dominate (while a few selfish strategies initially flourished, they all eventually became extinct). This last generational tournament was run six times, with “Tit for Tat” winning five of them. Five other cooperative strategies ended up nearly as successful and one of them won the sixth run. In summary, “Tit for Tat” (along with other cooperative strategies) was superior to competitive strategies.

Dawkins suggests that “Tit for Tat” ensures animals “prosper from mutual co-operation”<sup>41</sup> and does so by rewarding cooperative behavior and punishing those who do not reciprocate. This echoes Kropotkin, who when discussing ants argued that uncooperative individuals would be penalized, that “selfish” ants would be “treated as an enemy, or worse.” For bees “anti-social instincts continue to exist” but “natural selection continually must eliminate them” as those with “predatory inclinations” would be “eliminated in favor of those who understand the advantages of sociable life and mutual support.” He generalized this to other species, such as birds and mammals.<sup>42</sup> So, to use Dawkins’ terminology, Kropotkin does not assume mutual aid implies that individuals are “indiscriminate altruists” (or “suckers”) but rather are “grudgers,” individuals who cooperate but “if any individual cheats them, they remember the incident and bear a grudge.”<sup>43</sup>

Thus, *Mutual Aid* is not in contradiction with modern, gene-based evolutionary theory and, in fact, prefigures many of its arguments and conclusions.

Unsurprisingly, work in anthropology has also confirmed Kropotkin’s refutation of Huxley’s assertions, although his classification of early human societies (“savages” and “barbarians”), like most writings of that period, would make modern anthropologists cringe. So while the terminology is dated, the evidence and conclusions are not. Indeed, as anarchist anthropologist Brian Morris summarizes, “Kropotkin’s essential observations have been more than confirmed by recent anthropological research.”<sup>44</sup>

*Anthropologists have found widespread cooperation within tribal societies, confirming that there is nothing inherent in “human nature” which precludes egalitarian, cooperative, societies...*

Modern anthropology has confirmed Kropotkin's basic insight that life in society is the normal situation for humanity, that Huxley's assertion of individualistic competition had no basis in fact.<sup>45</sup>

Thus, notes Christopher Boehm, "foragers often cooperate with non-kin spontaneously and with a spirit of generosity" and "people in bands tend to cooperate intensively, with apparent good will and with great benefit to group members in general." Moreover, such groups of egalitarian foragers "uniformly eschew strong, authoritative leadership. Yet they do not give up on making decisions at the band level. Consensus-seeking is a strong feature of all egalitarian societies." This suggests that egalitarian cooperation in hunter-gatherers can lead to the "robust selection of genes for altruism."<sup>46</sup> This is, surely, unsurprising as it is doubtful humanity would have survived if it had not lived in societies and practised mutual aid. Thus the words of another anarchist and anthropologist, David Graeber: "The basic principles of anarchism – self-organization, voluntary association, mutual aid – are as old as humanity."<sup>47</sup>

Confirming Kropotkin, both anthropologists and archaeologists have found widespread cooperation within tribal societies so repeatedly confirming that there is nothing inherent in "human nature" which precludes egalitarian, cooperative, societies. So humanity, as Morris stresses, is "no exception to the principles of sociability. ... All humans, throughout history and without exception, thus live in societies." This means that we have "always existed in society, in the sense of a community of people bound together for common purposes – as anthropologists have demonstrated." Those who stress "that human were social beings – cooperative, compassionate, with an innate sense of fairness, and were actively engaged in mutual aid and reciprocal altruism" and consider this as being "recently discovered by neo-Darwinian scholars and evolutionary psychologists" in fact "completely forget to mention that Kropotkin had advanced these same ideas a hundred years ago."<sup>48</sup>

## Mutual Aid and Anarchism

While *Mutual Aid* is fundamentally a work of popular science, it does have a relationship with anarchist theory. It would be surprising if this were not the case and so we find that *Mutual Aid*, both in terms of methodology and subject, has themes which Kropotkin addressed in his explicitly libertarian work.

In terms of the methodology used, he was always keen to apply his scientific training. While (rightly) eschewing any suggestion of a "scientific anarchism"<sup>49</sup> Kropotkin (like Bakunin) had a healthy respect for science and did, quite rightly, sought to apply the scientific method to anarchist theory. "As to the method followed by the anarchist thinker," he wrote in 1887,

it is entirely different from that followed by the utopists.

... He studies human society as it is now and was in the past ... tries to discover its tendencies, past and present, its growing needs, intellectual and economic, and in his ideal he merely points out in which direction evolution goes.<sup>50</sup>

Decades later, in *Modern Science and Anarchism*, he reiterated that the anarchist applied "the inductive-deductive method" (the "only scientific method") to the study of history, economy, and developments in modern society. This was because "man is a part of Nature, as his personal and social life is a natural phenomenon" and so there was "no reason why we should ... abandon the method" when we study humanity.<sup>51</sup> Thus Kropotkin

brought his scientific training into his anarchism, being scientific "in the usual sense of being based on empirical observation and on developing an analysis that was consistent with and made sense of the data."<sup>52</sup>

This can be seen in *Mutual Aid* and so, while not directly an anarchist text, it applied what Kropotkin argued was the anarchistic method to evolution, history and popular social institutions and their development.<sup>53</sup> First, there is the perspective adopted with *Mutual Aid*. It is significant that Kropotkin considered his book as an attempt to write a history of evolution from below, from the perspective of the oppressed. As he put it, history, "such as it has hitherto been written, is almost entirely a description of the ways and means by which theocracy, military power, autocracy, and, later on, the richer classes' rule have been promoted, established, and maintained." The "mutual aid factor has been hitherto totally lost sight of; it was simply denied, or even scoffed at."<sup>54</sup> This, of course, is the anarchist position on social change from the bottom up applied to popularizing scientific ideas.

*Mutual Aid* also provides substantial evidence to support the anarchist theory of social change. Anarchists argue that human societal evolution (including periods of swift evolution called revolution) was based on the conflict between what could be termed the "law of mutual struggle" and the "law of mutual aid." The book provides empirical evidence that both historically and within current struggles, people have organized themselves to resist the oppression and exploitation resulting from private property, the state and other social hierarchies. This takes many forms, including village folk moots, neighborhood forums, unions, strikes, guilds, cooperatives, and so on). Thus the mutual aid tendency "continued to live in the villages and among the poorer classes in the towns." Indeed, insofar as new "economical and social institutions" were "a creation of the masses," they "have all originated from the same source" of mutual aid. By these means, the masses "maintained their own social organization, which was based upon their own conceptions of equity, mutual aid, and mutual support ... even when they were submitted to the most ferocious theocracy or autocracy."<sup>55</sup>

Thus the necessity of mutual aid produced in the struggle within, but against, class/hierarchical society would be the means by which the institutions of a free society would be created. As Harry Cleaver puts it, "Kropotkin was presenting the results of research into those concrete developments in the present which constituted elements of a post-capitalist society. ... He was showing how the future was already appearing in the present."<sup>56</sup> In the words of Kropotkin himself, anarchism "originated in everyday struggles" and "the anarchist movement was renewed each time it received an impression from some great practical lesson: it derived its origin from the teachings of life itself."<sup>57</sup> So rather than abstractly counterpoise a better society to capitalism, Kropotkin's work showed how we create the former while fighting the latter ("building the new world in the shell of the old," to quote the preamble of the Industrial Workers of the World). Given this, libertarian Marxist Paul Mattick was simply wrong to assert that the "whole controversy between Huxley and Kropotkin is somewhat beside the point — it does not touch upon the relevant issues of

*Recent research confirms that cooperative behavior is more successful than selfish behavior, both for individuals and for populations as a whole...*

society, namely that 'mutual aid' in human society presupposes the abolition of class relations."<sup>58</sup> Mattick failed to understand that institutions of mutual aid were created as part of the struggle against class systems and were the means to their abolition.

This can be seen from comparing Kropotkin's anarchist works to *Mutual Aid*. Trade unions and cooperatives are highlighted in the latter as examples of mutual aid within capitalism and these mutual aid institutions are mentioned in his 1906 preface to *The Conquest of Bread*. There, trade unionism was praised as having "a growing tendency towards ... being not only an instrument for improving the conditions of labor, but also to become an organisation which might, at a given moment, take into its hands the management of production." Cooperatives "both for production and for distribution, both in industry and agriculture" were also pointed to.<sup>59</sup> Elsewhere he stressed that the union "is absolutely necessary. It is the sole force of the workers which continues the direct struggle against capital without turning to parliamentarism."<sup>60</sup> Unsurprisingly, Kropotkin continually stressed the importance of strikes, solidarity and direct action by unions and was (like most communist-anarchists) a sympathetic, if not uncritical, supporter of syndicalism.<sup>61</sup>

If, as *Mutual Aid* suggests, the potential for anarchism is created by the masses themselves in the course of their struggles against oppression then it follows that socialism itself must be created that way. If not, if built (imposed) from above, socialism would never work—an analysis which was at the heart of Bakunin's critique of Marxism and which was proven right in Lenin's Russia. Like the Russian anarchists in 1905 and 1917, Kropotkin supported the workers' and peasants' councils ("soviets") as the framework of a free society and their "controlling the economic and political life of the country is a great idea." However, this was not what happened in Russia, for "as long as the country is governed by a party dictatorship, the workers' and peasants' councils evidently lose their entire significance" and are reduced to a "passive role," ceasing "to be free and of any use." The "pressure of a party dictatorship ... means the death-knell of the new system." He stressed that

production and exchange represented an undertaking so complicated that the plans of the state socialists ... would prove to be absolutely ineffective as soon as they were applied to life. No government would be able to organize production if the workers themselves through their unions did not do it in each branch of industry; for in all production there arise daily thousands of difficulties which no government can solve or foresee. ... Only the efforts of thousands of intelligences working on the problems can cooperate in the development of a new social system and find the best solutions for the thousands of local needs.<sup>62</sup>

Unsurprisingly, he concluded that the Bolsheviks "have shown how the Revolution is not to be made."<sup>63</sup>

This was due to the nature of the state. If the state, as Kropotkin stresses, is defined by "the existence of a power situated above society, but also of a territorial concentration as well as the concentration in the hands of a few of many functions in the life of societies" then such a structure has not evolved by chance. The "pyramidal organization which is the essence of the State" has developed in the history of human societies to prevent the direct association among men to shackle the development of local and individual initiative, to crush existing liber-

ties, to prevent their new blossoming – all this in order to subject the masses to the will of minorities.

This means that "a social institution cannot lend itself to all the desired goals, since, as with every organ, [the state] developed according to the function it performed, in a definite direction and not in all possible directions." By "seeing the State as it has been in history, and as it is in essence today," the conclusion anarchists "arrive at is for the abolition of the State."<sup>64</sup>

Kropotkin argued that many people, particularly state socialists, take "pleasure in confusing State with Society," a confusion made by those "who cannot visualise Society without a concentration of the State." Yet this "is to overlook the fact that Man lived in Societies for thousands of years before the State had been heard of" and that "large numbers of people [have] lived in communes and free federations." These were not states, as the state "is only one of the forms assumed by society in the course of history. Why then make no distinction between what is permanent and what is accidental?"<sup>65</sup> The state is a particular form of social organization based on certain key attributes and so "the word 'State' ... should be reserved for those societies with the hierarchical system and centralization."<sup>66</sup>

Kropotkin was well aware that the state was not some evil imposed on society from outside, but one which grows out of it and which, while sharing key features, evolves alongside it.<sup>67</sup> Based on this evolutionary analysis of the state, Kropotkin, like all anarchists, drew the conclusion "that the State organization, having been the force to which the minorities resorted for establishing and organizing their power over the masses, cannot be the force which will serve to destroy these privileges."<sup>68</sup>

This meant that socialism had to be built using new forms of social organization, based on forms of popular participation from below like those documented in *Mutual Aid* and elsewhere.<sup>69</sup> This suggests that Kropotkin's discussion of the Medieval City in *Mutual Aid* is of particular note, as it indicates that large communities can be organized in a non-statist manner. It "was not a centralized State" and, at the start, could "hardly be named a State as regards its interior organization" because it did not have the "present centralization of functions" nor "territorial centralization." In fact, "supreme political power could be vested entirely in a democratic forum" and the city was thus a "double federation" of democratic neighborhood forums and guilds for economic activity.<sup>70</sup>

Unsurprisingly, we find Kropotkin, echoing both Proudhon and Bakunin, arguing in his explicitly anarchist works that a free society would be organized in the same manner based on the organizations created in the struggle within capitalism.<sup>71</sup> Thus "the form that the Social Revolution must take" was "the independent Commune" and their federations along with "a parallel triumph of the people in the economic field" based on "associations of men and women who would work on the land, in the factories, in the mines, and so on, [and so] became themselves the managers of production." This meant that the "idea of independent Communes for the territorial organization, and of federations of Trade Unions for the organization of men in accordance with their different [productive] functions, gave a concrete conception of society regenerated by a social revolution."<sup>72</sup> Needless to say, Kropotkin was at pains to stress that this new system would be similar in its outlines to the past Communes discussed in *Mutual*

Aid and not an exact copy:

the Commune of today cannot possibly clothe itself again in the forms it assumed seven centuries ago; ... the Commune would have an organization so different from that which it had in the twelfth century that we would be in the presence of an absolutely new fact, emerging in new conditions and leading inevitably to absolutely different consequences.<sup>73</sup>

Significantly, every social revolution has confirmed Kropotkin's arguments. In Russia, the anarchists were the first to suggest that the workers' councils ("soviets" in Russian), produced in the process of the struggle against the Tsarist regime in 1905, should be the framework of a free society.<sup>74</sup> Unsurprisingly, in 1917 the libertarians whole-heartedly supported the factory committee movement and its attempts to introduce workers' self-management in the face of hostility from the capitalists as well as the Leninist state.<sup>75</sup> The largely anarchist-inspired Spanish Revolution of 1936 produced both community organisations (the neighborhood "Defence Committees") as well as the more well-known workplace and rural collectives.<sup>76</sup>

More recently, the popular revolt against neo-liberalism in Argentina that started in December 2001 saw both Autogestión and Horizontalidad develop, that is occupied (or "recuperated") workplaces as well as neighborhood (or "barrio") and inter-barrial assemblies.<sup>77</sup> As one participant in this revolt noted: "The anarchist movement has been talking about these ideas for years"<sup>78</sup> Indeed, one popular slogan at the time was "Occupy, Resist, and Produce" and it would be no exaggeration to suggest that this, undoubtedly unknowingly, summarized Kropotkin's message in *The Conquest of Bread!* Similarly, the demand "They all must go" ("Que se vayan todos") has distinct parallels with Kropotkin's proclamation "Enough with governments! Make way for the people! Make way for anarchy!"<sup>79</sup>

#### Notes:

1. Douglas H. Boucher, Sam James and Kathleen H. Keller, "The Ecology of Mutualism," *Annual Review of Ecology and Systematics* 13, 1982, 318-9. 2. *Cooperation Among Animals: An Evolutionary Perspective* (Oxford University Press, 1997), 8. 3. *Darwin, Competition and Cooperation* (Schuman, 1952), 42. 4. *On the Origin of Species* (Harvard University Press, 1964), 63. 5. As can be seen from the full title of the original 1798 edition: *An Essay on the Principle of Population as it Effects the Future Improvement of Society; with Remarks on the Speculations of Mr. Godwin, M. Condorcet and Other Writers*. Later editions included attacks on such radicals as Thomas Paine, Robert Owen and the followers of Thomas Spence.

6. *Fields, Factories and Workshops Tomorrow* (Freedom Press, 1985), 77, 78, 79. Proudhon, it should be noted, also attacked Malthus and his arguments in a classic essay entitled "The Malthusians" (*Le Représentant du Peuple*, August 10, 1848), reprinted in this issue. Benjamin Tucker translated the essay for the May 31, 1884, issue of *Liberty*. 7. David McNally's *Against the Market: Political Economy, Market Socialism and the Marxist Critique* (Verso, 1993) contains a good summary of the class nature and contradictions of Malthus' writings (75-91). Sadly, his discussion of Proudhon in the same work is marred with standard Marxist confusions and ignorance of the subject.

8. Ireland, for example, exported food during the Great Famine as the landlords found it more profitable to do that than feed their starving working class neighbors. How Malthus's essay must have

eased their conscious by arguing that the hunger around them was caused by "natural" forces rather than, say, their monopolization of the land and its products. See *Late Victorian Holocausts* (Verso, 2001) by Mike Davis on how Victorian attitudes, economics and policies helped cause famines across the world. The same process is still at work, with famines coexisting with the export of food.

9. Daniel P. Todes, *Darwin Without Malthus: The Struggle for Existence in Russian Evolutionary Thought* (Oxford University Press, 1989), 15. 10. quoted by Stephen Jay Gould, *The richness of life: The essential Stephen Jay Gould* (Vintage Books, 2007), 553-4. 11. *The Mismeasure of Man* (Penguin, 1981), 21-2, 23. 12. It should not be forgotten that, as Gould notes, "Darwin developed his theory as a conscious analog to the laissez-faire economics of Adam Smith" (*The richness of life*, 224). 13. *The Ecology of Freedom* (AK Press, 2005), 95, 92. 14. *Memoirs of a Revolutionist*, 107. 15. quoted by Todes, 130-1. 16. Todes, 31, 122, 104, 109, 122, 123. 17. Todes, 13.

18. Sadly, even today we see the strange coincidence of many "objective" scientists explaining the actions of animals and other cultures using assumptions and terminology from our own capitalistic and statist societies. Equally, it is considered "non-political" to stress the role of competition, but discussing cooperation in nature is usually dismissed as attempts to politicize (at best) or to romanticize (at worse) "science" or "nature" in the interests of ideology. As one group of scientists note, there was a "lack of interest in mutualism among ecologists for most of the 20th century, and the involvement of many of those who did study it with what at the time were left-wing causes. We suggest as a hypothesis for historians of science that mutualism has been avoided ... because of its association with left-wing politics (perhaps especially with Kropotkin)." (Boucher, James and Keller, "Ecology of Mutualism," 318)

19. Daniel P. Todes, "Darwin's Malthusian Metaphor and Russian Evolutionary Thought, 1859-1917," *Isis* 78, No. 294, 537-51. This essential essay was reprinted under the title "The Scientific Background of Kropotkin's Mutual Aid" in the anarchist journal *The Raven* 6:4. 20. "Kropotkin was no crackpot," *Bully For Brontosaurus* (Penguin, 1991), 331-2. 21. Oldroyd, *Darwinian Impacts*, 238. Oldroyd was inclined to the view that "Kropotkin's emphasis on mutual aid" forms "the 'best' of the analogies that are to be drawn" from nature as regards human society, as "man is, quite obviously, a social animal." (353)

22. "For with those animals which were benefited by living in close association, the individuals which took the greatest pleasure in society would best escape various dangers; whilst those that cared least for their comrades and lived solitary would perish in greater numbers. With respect to the origin of the parental and filial affections, which apparently lie at the basis of the social affections, it is hopeless to speculate; but we may infer that they have been to a large extent gained through natural selection." (Darwin, *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex* (Princeton University Press, 1981), 80-1). 23. *Descent of Man*, 82. 24. quoted by Todes, *Darwin Without Malthus*, 136. 25. Todes, 104, 123. 26. "Kropotkin was no crackpot," 338. 27. *The Altruism Equation: Seven Scientists Search for the Origins of Goodness* (Princeton University Press, 2006).

28. *The ape and the sushi master*, 122. 29. *Good natured: the origins of right and wrong in humans and other animals* (Harvard University Press, 1996) 30. "Any Animal Whatever: Darwinian Building Blocks of Morality in Monkeys and Apes," *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 7, 1-2, 2000, 4. 31. Douglas H. Boucher, "The Idea of Mutualism, Past and Future," *The Biology of Mutualism: Biology and Evolution* (Croom Helm, 1985), Boucher (ed.), 17.

**32.** "The Evolution of Reciprocal Altruism," *Quarterly Review of Biology* 46, 35, 48. **33.** *Natural Selection and Social Theory: Selected Papers of Robert Trivers* (Oxford University Press, 2002) 16. **34.** quoted by Frans de Waal, *Good Natured*, 25. **35.** *Natural Selection and Social Theory*, 16-7. Elsewhere, he noted "that just pursuing this scratch-my-back argument would generate rather quickly a reason for justice and fairness was very gratifying, because it was on the other side of the fence of that awful tradition in biology of the right of the strongest." (quoted by Frans de Waal, *Good natured*, 25) **36.** *Mutual Aid*, 68-9. **37.** de Waal, "Joint Ventures Require Joint Payoffs: Fairness among Primates," *Social Research* 73:2, 363.

**38.** *The Selfish Gene* (Oxford University Press, 2006), viii, 233, 183. He suggests an alternative title could have been "The Cooperative Gene" (ix). This raises the question whether it would have been so successful and whether, like *Mutual Aid*, it would have been referenced as the work of a (to quote Matt Ridley's description of Kropotkin) "dreamy" scholar at odds with grim reality. **39.** Trivers praised this research, noting it "isolated a simple rule of action, tit-for-tat, which was evolutionarily stable" (*Natural Selection and Social Theory*, 18). **40.** *The Selfish Gene*, 202. **41.** *The Selfish Gene*, 219. Moreover, this applies to competition between groups as well, with Dawkins noting that internally competitive groups "will be more likely subsequently to go extinct. There can therefore be a kind of higher-level ... selection in favor of reciprocal altruism." (321)

**42.** *Mutual Aid*, 38, 41. He explicitly pointed to birds (69) and marmots. For the latter, he noted that "the same remark ... made when speaking of the bees" could be made, and so while they "have maintained their fighting instincts, ... in their big associations ... the unsociable instincts have no opportunity to develop, and the general result is peace and harmony." (59) **43.** *The Selfish Gene*, 184-5. **44.** Morris, *Kropotkin*, 177.

**45.** It should be noted that Kropotkin influenced anthropology, with Alfred Reginald Radcliffe-Brown, father of modern social anthropology and one of the co-founders of British social anthropology, earning the nickname "Anarchy Brown" for his close association with Kropotkin. Kropotkin's argument on selection for skills that allowed humans to thrive by working together laid the groundwork for Radcliffe-Brown's later emphasis on social anthropology. (Richard J. Perry, "Radcliffe-Brown and Kropotkin: The Heritage of Anarchism in British Social Anthropology," *Kroeber Anthropological Society Papers*, 51/52 (1974), 61-65)

**46.** *Hierarchy in the Forest* (Harvard University Press, 1999), 203, 208, 254. As an interesting aside, Boehm speculates that an "egalitarian society" is one "taken over ... by rebellious subordinates. ... It came into being because the rank and file began to act on their anti-authoritarian tendencies" and so the "collective power of resentful subordinates is at the base of human egalitarian society." (238) It would be interesting to see what Bakunin would have made of this, given that he argued in *God and the State* that it was mankind's ability to rebel that made us human.

**47.** *Possibilities: Essays on Hierarchy, Rebellion and Desire* (AK Press, 2007), 303. **48.** Morris, 174, 148-9. **49.** Ironically, it was Proudhon, not Marx, who first proclaimed the need for a "scientific socialism" in 1840, shortly after stating "I am an anarchist" and just before defining "anarchy" and discussing its implications as a social goal (*What is Property?* Cambridge University Press, 1994, 209, 205). **50.** *Anarchism*, 47. Significantly, this essay was originally entitled "The Scientific Basis of Anarchy."

**51.** "Modern Science and Anarchism," 54. **52.** Harry Cleaver, Kropotkin, Self-valorization and the Crisis of Marxism," 121. **53.**

"You have seen, with *Mutual Aid*," he wrote to another anarchist, "what a remarkable, powerful tool of investigation the anarchist tendency represents." (quoted by Ruth Kinna, "Kropotkin's theory of Mutual Aid in Historical Context," 279) **54.** *Mutual Aid*, 230-1. **55.** *Mutual Aid*, 181, 107. **56.** "Kropotkin, Self-valorization...," 120. **57.** "Modern Science and Anarchism," 58, 57.

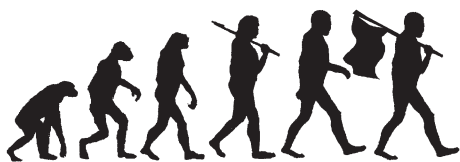
**58.** "Kropotkin on Mutual Aid — Review," *Western Socialist* (Boston), January-February 1956. **59.** *The Conquest of Bread* (AK Press, 2007), 52-3. However, "none of these may, in any degree, be taken as a substitute for Communism, or even for Socialism." **60.** quoted by Miller, *Kropotkin* (University of Chicago Press, 1976), 177. **61.** see Caroline Cahm's *Kropotkin and the rise of revolutionary anarchism, 1872-1886* for an excellent account of Kropotkin's ideas on this matter. **62.** *Anarchism*, 254-5, 76-7. **63.** quoted by Alexander Berkman, *The Bolshevik Myth* (Pluto Press, 1989), 75. **64.** *The State: Its Historic Role* (Freedom Press, 1987), 10, 59, 56. **65.** *The State: Its Historic Role*, 9-10.

**66.** Kropotkin, *Ethics*, 317fn. **67.** "Every economic phase has a political phase corresponding to it, and it would be impossible to touch private property unless a new mode of political life be found at the same time," argued Kropotkin. "A society founded on serfdom is in keeping with absolute monarchy; a society based on the wage system and the exploitation of the masses by the capitalists finds its political expression in parliamentarianism." As such, the state form changes and evolves, but its basic function (defender of minority rule) and structure (delegated power into the hands of a few) remains. This suggests that "a free society regaining possession of the common inheritance must seek, in free groups and free federations of groups, a new organization, in harmony with the new economic phase of history." (*The Conquest of Bread*, 82)

**68.** "Modern Science and Anarchism," 82. **69.** Kropotkin pointed to the directly democratic federated "sections" of the Great French Revolution as one example of "a people governing itself directly — when possible — without intermediaries, without masters." In fact, "the principles of anarchism ... dated from 1789, and ... had their origin, not in theoretical speculations, but in the deeds of the Great French Revolution." (*The Great French Revolution*, Elephant Editions, 1986, vol. 1, 210, 204) **70.** *Mutual Aid*, 151-3.

**71.** "As early as the 1860s and 1870s, the followers of Proudhon and Bakunin in the First International were proposing the formation of workers' councils designed both as a weapon of class struggle against capitalists and as the structural basis of the future libertarian society." (Paul Avrich, *The Russian Anarchists*, AK Press, 2005, 73) **72.** "Modern Science and Anarchism," 74, 78, 79. This self-management would, of course, be based on the popular expropriation "of all those who have the means of exploiting human beings; the return to the community ... of everything that in the hands of anyone can be used to exploit others." (*Words of a Rebel*, 207-8) **73.** *Words of a Rebel*, 81.

**74.** See Paul Avrich, *The Russian Anarchists* (80-1). In 1907, libertarians concluded that the revolution required "the proclamation in villages and towns of workers' communes with soviets of workers' deputies ... at their head." (quoted by Alexandre Skirida, *Facing the Enemy: A History of Anarchist Organization from Proudhon to May 1968*, AK Press, 2002, 77) **75.** See Maurice Brinton, "The Bolsheviks and Workers Control" (contained in *For Workers' Power*). **76.** See Abel Paz, *Durruti in the Spanish Revolution* (AK Press, 2007). **77.** See *Horizontalism: Voices of Popular Power in Argentina*, edited by Marina Sitrin (AK Press, 2006). **78.** Emilo, quoted in *Horizontalism*, 38. **79.** *Words of a Rebel*, 177.



# Social Biology & Solidarity

REVIEW ESSAY BY GRAHAM PURCHASE

Lee Dugatkin, **The Altruism Equation: Seven scientists search for the origins of goodness**, Princeton University Press, 2006.

Individual or natural selection was classically conceived as involving super-fecundity, accidental/random useful variation and intra-specific competition leading to the survival of variations and adaptations conferring greater fitness in a particular local environment. Darwin thought that mutualism and group behavior could be easily explained in terms of individual or natural selection, as have most Darwinians. The 19<sup>th</sup> century evolutionary philosopher G. Romanes, in his *Darwin and after Darwin*, applauds Kropotkin's presentation of "a large and interesting body of facts showing the great prevalence of the principle of cooperation in organic nature." But, he added, Kropotkin's examples "fall under the explanatory sweep of the Darwinian theory."<sup>1</sup> P. Bowler, in his authoritative study of evolutionary theory around the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, similarly suggests that although *Mutual Aid* was a welcome and timely challenge to the excesses of the Social Darwinist school, Darwinians did not regard Kropotkin's mutual aid thesis as representing a challenge to the theory of natural selection.<sup>2</sup>

Kropotkin never intended *Mutual Aid* to be an alternative or opposing theory to Darwin, and it is not surprising that biologists haven't either. Like the majority of Darwinians, Gould argues that it is not necessary to evoke group selection to explain the evolution of cooperative behavior:

The result of struggle for existence may be cooperation rather than competition, but mutual aid must benefit individual organisms in Darwin's world of explanation. Kropotkin sometimes speaks of mutual aid as selected for the benefit of entire populations or species – a concept foreign to classic Darwinian logic. But Kropotkin also (and often) recognized that selection for mutual aid directly benefits each individual in its own struggle for personal success.<sup>3</sup>

By 1910 evolutionary biologists had reformulated Darwin's unit of natural selection in terms of competing genes rather than individual organisms – an idea first entertained by Kropotkin's most significant intellectual rivals, including Huxley and Spencer.<sup>4</sup> Today the theory of genetic selection is popularly associated with the ideas of Richard Dawkins and particularly with his book *The Selfish Gene*. Dawkins argues that evolution and development come from fierce competition between selfish genes that unrelentingly seek to copy themselves. Organisms or bodies are "survival machines," programmed by the genes in which they are temporarily housed. In my view it is an intuitively more obvious thesis that organisms and multi-celled complexity evolved through collective processes like symbiosis and mutualism.

The other major argument put forward by gene-selectionists when rejecting collective explanations and processes is their theory of inclusive fitness or kin-selection. This is the idea that apparently altruistic group behavior can be more plausibly interpreted in terms of selfish strategies to pass on genes through closely related kin.

Darwin's greatest insight is that the units of inheritance are individual organisms naturally selected by the environment accord-

ing to their fitness. The post-Darwinian idea that the individual gene is a more logical focus for natural selection has been central to the neo-Darwinian synthesis – the dominant paradigm held by Dugatkin, along with most evolutionary biologists during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Eugene Odum is the experimental and theoretical ecologist most associated with the development of systems ecology as a scientific field during the 1950s and early '60s. Odum, who regards Kropotkin as a pioneering ecologist, used "group selection as part of his explanation for ecosystem stability."<sup>5</sup> For Odum, the evolution and expression of stability or homeostasis in ecosystems resulted from "a reduction in competition and an increase in mutualism. ... The evolution of homeostasis and the consequent stability of ecosystems occurred through a combination of group selection and co-evolution."<sup>6</sup>

Inherent in Odum's analysis was functional language, in which organisms play functional roles as parts of ecosystems. This notion of community-generated "environmental homeostasis" was contrary to the theories of individualist population biologists such as Lack and Williams, for whom "populations are simply aggregations of individuals." Lack and Williams argued that "the recycling of nutrients to the plants in an ecosystem is not a function of decomposing bacteria; it is simply a fortuitous side effect of bacterial metabolism." Apparently cooperative mechanisms, they argued, could similarly be explained in individualist terms, as, for example, when animals huddled together for warmth: "each individual" is simply "insulating itself." Thus "co-evolution can be explained in terms of individual selection; two individuals may cooperate, but each does so to increase its own individual fitness," as for example, symbiosis may develop from initial parasitism. At the heart of the controversy was the nature of altruism. The question is not "did animals contribute to the welfare of the group," but whether they also sometimes do so "in self-sacrificing ways."<sup>7</sup>

## Dugatkin's neo-Huxleyian gauntlet

Dugatkin's popular new book examines biological altruism by examining the life and ideas of notable evolutionists from Darwin to the contemporary neo-Darwinian academic celebrities Wilson, Dawkins and Hamilton. The orientation is historical, biographical and mathematical. After consideration of pioneering thinkers (Huxley, Kropotkin and Allee), Dugatkin describes the lives of several mathematicians who sought to solve or refine Huxley's *Altruism Equation*. Dugatkin also devotes chapters to related contemporary fields such as games theory.

The first few chapters of the *Altruism Equation* cover the Huxley-Kropotkin exchange and the work of noted ecologist Warder Allee, who developed and tested Kropotkin's ideas in the 1930s and '40s. Allee supported his cooperative theories with simple laboratory experiments and in a number of clearly composed popular scientific books. Dugatkin believes Huxley was right and "evolutionary biologists almost uniformly agree that Kropotkin was wrong" (30). Huxley thought close family

bonds are solely responsible for any apparent altruism and cooperation observable among animals and humans. Dugatkin's book is devoted to showing how Huxley's hypothesis is validated by contemporary kin-selection theory popularized by Dawkins in such books as *The Selfish Gene*.

The neo-Huxleyian gauntlet is always being cast anew. Society must be illusory, according to Dugatkin's view of animals as genetically motivated to individually compete with one another in selfishly reproducing their genes. The family, for Dugatkin, is simply the most efficient means for reproductive success and can be considered as a single genetic-economic survival unit. Beyond individual animals and the often-only-temporary bonds of family life, society has no genetic rationale or basis

and cannot therefore exist – or exists only as an epiphenomena produced by the numerous selfish single-minded choices made by individual animals seeking to maximize their reproductive success.

Dugatkin describes the Huxley-Kropotkin debate with superficial biographical sketches. These provide a colorful historical backdrop to his story of the evolution and theory of kin-selection, but the analysis lacks depth. The chapter on Allee is a little more substantial, and Dugatkin's emphasis upon the strong ecological and economic dimension in Allee's approach is commendable. But Dugatkin

simply rejects Allee's and Kropotkin's ideas on sociality, rather than meaningfully critiquing them. Dugatkin portrays Kropotkin and Allee as eccentric or romantic, their objectivity sullied by strong minority political and religious convictions – a fault not shared by the misanthropic Huxley, a right-headed, commonsensical British bull dog.

### Dugatkin's genetic reductionism

Dugatkin's exclusive focus upon the struggle for reproductive success rather than the economic life and social gregariousness of animals is excessively restrictive and reductive. Social psychological needs, impulses and emotions emerge from, but are not reducible or imposed by, genetic relatedness and economic necessity. Beyond the feelings accompanying love of kin and economically beneficial social behavior favoring group living and defense, there are also social-psychological motivations behind association, friendship and apparent acts of generosity or mutual aid.

Being a good parent does not preclude a desire to be a model citizen. Citizenship and parenthood are distinct roles and aspirations involving self-sacrifice or cooperation. They have different emotional sources, but are complementary rather than mutually exclusive. Parental or familial love emerges from the narrow reproductive realm, whilst the desire to perform public service or socialize widely relates to broader cultural, economic, ecological and social-psychological needs and contexts.

Observations of some intelligent animals reveal how their social life is not restricted to familial relationships. Urban crows regularly go to the garbage tip and interact with members from the entire local population. Crows have superb memories and are well known for their huge annual regional assemblies at traditional "parliament" sites. Crow parliaments may be purely social, as they have no apparent economic or reproductive rationale.

It may be more probable that we will aid our closest kin, but this needn't prompt us to ignore acts or habits of association,

friendship, assistance and heroism emerging from both individual and collective feelings of solidarity accompanying social living. The experience, acceptance and habits of social life and relationships generate altruistic acts or tendencies, and it is these that Dugatkin's analysis of altruism and the ideology of kin-selectionism dismisses or denies.

An essential feature of genetic reductionism is the idea of a single gene or allele hierarchically determining one particular physiological or behavioral characteristic. The so-called ageing, fidelity or gay genes are examples of this way of thinking, which is useful from a medical, funding or journalistic standpoint but presents a misleading characterization of how embryological and social-ecological development actually proceeds in real life.<sup>8</sup>

Dugatkin's definition of altruism is based upon a misunderstanding of the concept. Parental sacrifice or familial love isn't usually included in the concept of altruism. Parents are expected to support their children; caring for one's immediate family is a universal norm and not considered especially meritorious, though it is one component of a good or responsible citizen or person. Thus, his study might more correctly be called the Parental or Familial Love Equation, because he doesn't consider that altruism, defined as assisting distantly or non-related fellows, ever occurs in nature. But Kropotkin and Allee insisted that it did occur and sought to examine its sources and psycho-social evolution:

It is not love to my neighbor – whom I often do not know at all – which induces me to seize a pail of water and to rush towards his house when I see it on fire; it is a far wider, even though more vague feeling or instinct of human solidarity and sociability which moves me. (*Mutual Aid*, Introduction)

"Love," Kropotkin rightly insists, is not at all the same thing as altruism.

Dugatkin implies that even mundane forms of societal mutualism and self-sacrifice (*solidarity*) cannot exist among non-related non-human animals because Hamilton's parental equation and the mathematics of kin selection make it impossible.

Kropotkin, through his own experience, understood that *heroism* occurs spontaneously and isn't uncommon. Kropotkin gained public commendation when saving a school from fire and shortly after became a national hero by risking his life to successfully rescue Russian settlements in Siberia from starvation. Heroic acts can be distinguished from mundane acts of *solidarity* or *generalized reciprocal altruism* ensuring a pleasant and civilized social existence (being kind generally helps everyone including yourself). But nobody seriously asserts the existence of a common decency gene.

### Genetic, epigenetic & social inheritance

Ecosystems, animal groups and human cultural systems collectively reconstruct themselves in autonomous space without direct reference or physical connection to genetic determinants. The apparently innate and sublime emotions of general human solidarity and close friendships that even the most wicked among us have at some point experienced are learnt and felt anew by each successive generation. Both young love and forest regrowth are reconstructive stages in the epigenetic or developmental processes of life's continual renewal.

Genetic systems are only one small part of the integrated processes and networks essential for the evolution and repro-

*The capacity for solidarity and friendship grows with the need to learn from others in the social or peer group the skills necessary for survival...*

duction of natural systems. Ecosystems, embryos, animal social hierarchies and human minds are all epigenetic reconstructions; convergent systems that automatically and collectively develop as part of a predictable, repeatable but not determined reconstructive developmental process of becoming in each successive generation. Collective convergent reconstructive creativity sustains the other 99 percent of our systems being and reality whose emergence isn't related in any direct or unmediated way to DNA.

Complex psychological states elude neat classification, as seen in the group psychology of *competitive altruism*. This behavior is sometimes seen at fundraisers, festivals, party conventions or charity drives, when participants are conspicuously more generous if the gifting is observed because they wish to appear more beneficent in front of others.

Traits like altruism, spitefulness and disgust may primarily be reproduced by social inheritance. In many animal groups, social or cultural instruction and inheritance supersede genetic instincts. Most animals pass through a youthful open phase as they learn to survive into adulthood. Young meerkats are socially schooled in a similar way to human children, with adults teaching youngsters how to handle dangerous live prey. Crows and tits have long been known to pass knowledge for opening things such as drink cartons to others. Primates, dolphins and killer whales have been observed to develop new hunting techniques and pass this knowledge on to other members of the pod or band. These socially inherited skills and capacities are forms of epigenetic inheritance that have an equally important role to play in the reconstruction and maintenance of life as do genetic inheritance systems. The capacity for solidarity and friendship grows with the need to learn from others in the social or peer group the skills necessary for survival.

The search for biologically heritable altruistic tendencies beyond parenthood may be entirely futile, as genetics isn't really the appropriate level in the developmental system of things to explain complex social-psychological states that propel us to risk our lives to save others or promote social-environmental justice.

### Friendship and social reciprocity

Capuchin monkeys, when given a choice between receiving food or receiving food and also having another monkey receive food, choose the double amount when paired with a relative or "friend." It is this socially self-directed love for friends that is of interest here. Capuchins' preferential altruism for family and friends falls short of generalized reciprocity.

In another experiment, female rats were paired with littermates in cages separating them with a wire mesh. A lever enabled a rat to deliver a portion of food to her sister but not herself. The lever was activated much more frequently when the other half of the cage was occupied and this continued even when an unfamiliar and unrelated rat was introduced. Claudia Rutte of Bern University in Switzerland, who conducted the research, concluded that "because the rats were never rewarded for their behavior, only that of others," the rats had "developed what they call generalized reciprocity – that is, they were generous even with an unknown partner because another rat had first been kind to them."<sup>9</sup>

Dugatkin's selfish-parental-love-gene equation is not the right path to finding a plausible explanation for the clear capacity among many animals to socialize, cooperate and occasionally exhibit surprisingly risky behavior to assist kindred beings.

Kropotkin and Allee understood that generalized reciprocity requires a combination of semantic, social-ecological, economic and social-psychological explanations rather than (or in addition to) a genetic or reproductive approach. Dugatkin's hypothesis is derived from research and modeling particularly relevant to eusocial or super-social insects (ants and bees), some small colonial birds, and the uniquely atypical reproductive structure of naked mole rats. There is little reason to doubt that the mathematical modeling of the evolutionary strategy of kin-selection helps explain the genetic inheritance system in relation to their social structure or hierarchies. It is, however, debatable whether such findings can be generally applied to animals with very different social structures and/or complex social psychologies and sexual selection processes.

### Association and solidarity

Unconscious association pervades nature and is the source of the wider solidarity experienced to some degree by all living organisms. It is the fact and awareness of solidarity and interconnectedness that Kropotkin and Allee believed prompted general good will and acts of heroism.

Without *solidarity* of the individual with the species, the animal kingdom would never have developed or reached its present perfection. The most advanced being upon earth would still be one of those tiny specks swimming in the water and scarcely perceptible under a microscope. Would even this exist? For are not the earliest aggregations of cellules themselves an instance of *association* in the struggle?<sup>10</sup>

Collectivity or "association" isn't cooperative or competitive. "Solidarity" just happens. Molecules and cells like to form systems together with their sisters. Mass collective emergent behavior pervades the microcosmos in both the inorganic and living spheres.

A great diversity of predictable second-order emergent patterns or systems can be readily seen in inorganic chemical-physical behaviors of molecular system formation in specific environments. The complex interactions of molecular systems represent the source of collective living systems. The first cells were bounded symbiotic collectives of RNAs, proteins and carbohydrates.

Signaling to one another, free-living bacteria mass and conjugate by exchanging DNA with tube-like organs. Aquatic phytoplankton avoid predatory threats posed by increasing populations of small animals (ciliates) through the formation of large colonial globules initiated in response to semantic interpretation of the intensity of the totality of collective signals released by phytoplankton into their environment.<sup>11</sup> Many types of free-living bacteria choose to congregate together as bio-films. In comparison to individual bacteria, those living in fixed or non-mobile bacterial biofilms (slime) benefit from a collective metabolic matrix that provides them with anti-biotic resistance and produces chemical weaponry and antibiotics that are toxic to their predators or suppress other sorts of bacteria.

Individual animals consisting of millions of epigenetically diverse sister-cells (liver, heart, blood cells) evolved through the evolution of complex semantic interchanges facilitated by collective signaling systems enabling and coordinating closely related groups of cells to communicate and work together for collectively constructing a single larger organism. The supra-cellular

memory constituting the body plan of animals is a convergent reconstruction accomplished by the mutual self-organization of a large group of smaller groups of specialized cells forgoing the chance of direct selfish reproduction, a task performed only by the egg cells.

The mass collective self-organization of cells or migrating wildebeests provides evidence for the pervasiveness of “association” and “solidarity” (Kropotkin), or what Allee called “mass effects” and “innate cooperation.” Collectivity is in my opinion a more appropriate, flexible and less simplistic and politically loaded term than either competition or cooperation – terms that implicitly require an evaluative interpretation of behavior.

### **Dugatkin, Dawkins and Kropotkin**

Dugatkin's *Altruism Equation*, like *Mutual Aid* and other books of this genre, starts with bees and concludes by suggesting that human nature, behavior and society can be scientifically observed to work in ways that are consistent with or reinforce their author's account of the “laws” of biological evolution. Dugatkin shifts effortlessly from biology to anthropological and sociological data in support of his (neo-Huxleyian) claim that non-kin groups and wider social associations played absolutely no part in the earlier evolution of humankind.

In his book on atheism, the *God Delusion*, Dawkins singles out human group psychology as the biological and evolutionary source of religious and political fanaticism and violence. Although Dawkins rejects any role for group selection, he follows Darwin's belief that groups have played a pivotal role in shaping human society and the human psyche. Dugatkin's position on the role of groups in human evolution contrasts strongly with Darwin and Dawkins. Darwin thought that animal and human groups plausibly explained the biosocial origin and evolution of morality. Dawkins stresses the self-evident importance of group psychologies in human evolution predisposing humanity to religion and war – a view he shares with Kropotkin.

There is no conceivable way that there could evolve a human gene that favors Beetle Mania or fanatical love of Manchester United Football Club; there is no gene that causes people to gain satisfaction from joining the voluntary British Lifeboat Association or accept generally inconvenient, poorly paid and dangerous jobs. What gene explains the self-sacrifice of patriots and revolutionaries in pursuit of independence and social justice? Genetics can not explain mass social phenomena/psychologies. Yet Dawkins (genetic-reductionist par-excellence), in contradiction to his own individualist evolutionary theories, invokes group or mass psychological phenomena in his *God Delusion* as the primary impetus in the evolution and persistence of religious or nationalist behavior, cultures and mindsets.

Darwin attempted to explain our moral sense of conscience exclusively from the side of natural history.<sup>12</sup> He recognized that the group was of primary importance in explaining the development of sympathy and social conscience among the higher animals. Following Darwin, Kropotkin argues that our senses of social consciousness, solidarity, sympathy and remorse, etc., could only have evolved within a group. Clearly the intensity of, for example, socially induced shame could not have evolved if we had lived in loose anonymous aggregations, and even less so if we lived as isolated individuals. These feelings also could not be solely an extension of parental devotion. The fact of social

conscience is therefore an indirect proof of the importance of the group within the development of our species and of the animals from which we evolved. These feelings, along with the sense of solidarity engendered by the intensity of social living, were the origin of our moral concepts and have served to counteract our more egotistical desires.<sup>13</sup> There is no logical necessity for our sense of loyalty, honor and obligation. But regardless of the particular moral codes of any given society, these feelings and sentiments were central to the social structure and survival of the group. Even criminals have their own sense of honor and obligation to one another.

Darwin made a special note of the moral sense in dogs and elephants and concluded that the higher development of morality in humans resulted from habit and our greater intellectual and linguistic capabilities. The evolution of our moral sense is a result of *group adaptation*, as is the significant lessening of moral concern for strangers or non-group members. This lack of concern for outsiders or foreigners, Kropotkin believed, provided further evidence for the predominance of the group in our evolution:

Unfortunately, in the tribal system, the rule “everyone for all” does not extend further than the individual's own tribe... [and] generally speaking, inter-tribal relations are entirely different from relations within the tribe. And in the subsequent development of the human race no religion could eradicate the conception of a “stranger.” Actually, religions most frequently become a source of ferocious enmity, which grew still more acute with the development of the State. And as a result a double standard of ethics was being developed, which still exists in our own time and leads to such horrors as the recent war.<sup>14</sup> [World War I]

If one does not wish to ascribe a supernatural origin to morality, then it becomes necessary to look at how morality may have developed out of nature. This tradition has a long history. It can be clearly discerned among the 18<sup>th</sup> century thinkers, such as Adam Smith and David Hume (whom Kropotkin discusses at length in his *Ethics*), who sought to show how natural feelings of sympathy for one's relatives, friends and neighbors, when combined with habit, utility, reason and intelligence, were the source of our ethical conceptions. Kropotkin suggests that, like biology, which had shown over the ages how “unicellular organisms evolved into ... the higher mammals and man, ethics must demonstrate how moral conceptions were able to develop from the sociality inherent in higher animals and primitive savages, to highly idealistic moral teachings.”<sup>15</sup>

### **Dismissing social anthropology**

Dugatkin's thesis is far more radical than that of Dawkins and Darwin. Dugatkin not only rejects group selection, but also the idea that humans ever identified themselves with non-family groups:

Kropotkin was wrong, and the family most likely did serve as the origin of subsequent human grouping. Today, work from biology, anthropology and ethnography clearly shows that in human hunter-gatherer societies, groups and villages are often composed of extended family members. (30)

Despite Dugatkin's otherwise copious footnotes, not one reference to support this statement is provided. Pre-statist societies composed of numerous family groups were not isolated from one another as Dugatkin implies but federated into much larger ethnic, linguistic,

territorial, ecological and cultural associations within which it was usual and often compulsory that one's marriage partner came from another band within the clan or tribe.<sup>16</sup>

Kropotkin never denied the importance of the family, and believed that one of the many drawbacks of the small experimental communes advocated by early socialist thinkers was that they failed to provide enough room for individual and family life. But cultural factors were also important.

Social anthropologists do not as a whole reject Kropotkin's views. Professor Morris of the anthropology department of the University of London recently published a book arguing that Kropotkin was right. Morris' research has shown that Kropotkin's analysis of !Kung-San peoples of central southern Africa is both insightful and the subject matter of recent largely complementary professional anthropological articles.

### Darwinist or Neo-Platonist?

Dugatkin's study is premised upon the claim that a single hypothetical gene hierarchically determines or controls social behavior according to a universal altruism equation that scientifically explains the origins and essence of goodness. The ancient Greek philosopher Plato in his *Theory of The Forms* popularized the idea of the existence of some form of the good. Plato thought that the goodness we see is a representative product or state informed by a single abstract idea or model of The Good.

To the modern reader, Plato's conception sounds slightly ridiculous or only of interest as a metaphorical or literary allusion to something very much more complex and diffuse. We should be similarly skeptical of Dugatkin's claim that Hobbes, Huxley, Hamilton and Dawkins hypothesized, investigated, discovered and then comprehensively validated the only and absolutely mathematically true equation of individual gene selection capable of informing, shaping and facilitating the inheritance, evolution and expression of natural goodness. It is not the mathematics that is problematic, but the premises upon which the calculations revolve. Aggression and agreeableness are not traits heritable or programmed by one specific gene as often assumed in mathematical models. Good parenting is only one instance or type of goodness, and not the one usually thought of as being altruistic. The models are useful in describing how there might unsurprisingly and uncontroversially be an underlying genetic basis to the special affection we reserve for our children or closer relatives, but doesn't even begin to explain the existence of the Indian extended family or the good will we routinely extend to strangers and non-relatives.

### Notes:

1. Romanes, G. *Darwin and after Darwin*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: Open Court 1901) 269. 2. Bowler, P.J., *The Eclipse of Darwinism*, J. Hopkins Uni Press, 1983, 56. 3. Gould, S. J., *Bully for Brontosaurus*, Hutchinson Radius, 1991, 335. 4. Hagen, J., *An Entangled Bank: The Origins of Ecosystem Ecology*, New Jersey, Rutgers, 1992, 3-4. 5. Hagen, 161. 6. Hagen, 129. 7. Hagen, 154-6.

8. For an analysis of genetic determinism and embryological development consult the works of: W. M. Ho, M. Barbieri and Jack Cohen. 9. Quote from the *New York Times*; the study can be found at Rutte C, Taborsky M (2007), "Generalized Reciprocity in Rats," *PLoS Biol* 5(7): e196 <http://doi:10.1371/journal.pbio.0050196> 10. Kropotkin, "Anarchist Morality," *Revolutionary Pamphlets* (ed. Baldwin), 97. 11. Report from Georgia Institute of Technology in online

edition of *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* June 11, 2007. 12. Darwin, C., *The Descent of Man* (1871) Chap III.

13. Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid*, London, Heinemann, 1915 Popular Edition, 88. 14. Kropotkin, *Ethics: Origin and Development*, Tudor Publishing Co., 1947, 78-9. 15. *Ethics*, 67. 16. *Mutual Aid*, 71. 17. *Mutual Aid*, 81-5.

## "Intelligent Design" and the attack on materialism

John Bellamy Foster, Brett Clark and Richard York, *Critique of Intelligent Design: Materialism versus Creationism from Antiquity to the Present*. Monthly Review Press, 2008, 240 pages, paper, \$15.95.

The authors set out in this volume not simply to demolish the "intelligent design" subterfuge, under which Creationists have been trying to sneak their religious and anti-scientific doctrines into science classrooms across the United States, but also to frame the debate in the context of a centuries-long struggle between a materialist theory of the universe articulated in ancient Greece by Epicurus (and which forms the basis for modern scientific thinking, as well as for the broader Enlightenment and socialist project) and an obscurantist dogmatism masquerading under guise of "diversity," uncertainty, and generalized confusion.

While the latter is a broader project than can be done justice here, and to some extent reads as if they were seizing on the present debate as an opportunity to interject a much broader philosophical agenda which will seem rather arcane to many readers, the authors (all sociologists writing in the Marxist tradition) do demonstrate quite conclusively that the Creationists themselves view the debate over the teaching of evolution in such terms. And, they argue, in the long run a tepid compromise that leaves the domains of science and religion to co-exist in their own areas of specialization is intellectually dishonest, and fails to confront the underlying issue. Materialism, they insist, is the defining feature of science, and of the struggle for human freedom. (21)

Foster, Clark and York do an admirable job of exposing the covert agenda of the Intelligent Design camp, citing internal documents and other material which make quite clear that they see the attack on evolution as a wedge that once in place can be broadened to challenge a materialist philosophy these fundamentalists see as suffusing our entire culture and politics. They trace the intellectual origins of this approach, and discuss how a series of Materialist thinkers including Epicurus, the Enlightenment philosophers, Marx, Freud, Darwin and others developed their theories in opposition to the dominance of religious thought and other obfuscations.

"To turn to 'the will of God,' in a desperate attempt to account for the world around us, as Spinoze wrote, is to take refuge in 'the sanctuary of ignorance,'" they conclude. (201) "It is to deny human freedom and our responsibility to each other as social beings – along with our responsibility to nature, i.e., life itself. ... [R]eason, science, and human freedom only truly commence, as Epicurus recognized in antiquity, once the gods have at last been banished from the earth."

This is a useful book, if a bit of a slog at times. But I found the authors' attempt to hang their particular Marxian vision on this debate off-putting. Certainly one can not be a Marxist (or, for that matter, an anarchist) and believe in "Intelligent Design"; but it is possible to embrace rational inquiry and evidence without subscribing to any particular political philosophy. [JB]

# The God Delusion & anarchism

REVIEW ESSAY BY IAIN MCKAY

Most anarchists will find Richard Dawkins' critique of god and religion in *The God Delusion* (Bantum Press, 2006) both admirable and timely. However, most would be surprised that any critique of god would fail to mention, never mind discuss, Bakunin's *God and the State*. This anarchist classic explores the logic of religion, explaining why religion has such a baneful effect on humanity. Most anarchists would agree that its logic and passion is essential reading for all seeking to understand religion. Bakunin is, however, mentioned in passing and it is worthwhile to explain the fallacies associated with Dawkins' discussion.

First, it is essential to note that the argument against anarchism is not Dawkins', but it is in his book and this would be where most people would see it. It is a quite common fallacy, and resurfaces with regularity – particularly when a government (for whatever reason) becomes neutralized. The resulting disorder is usually labelled “anarchy” and some point to this as empirical evidence that anarchism is impossible. But the argument is fallacious, as it is based on a fundamentally mistaken notion of what anarchism actually argues.

What is the fallacy? As part of his excellent discussion on whether religion makes us good or not, Dawkins quotes (228) “Steven Pinker's disillusioning experience of a police strike in Montreal”:

As a young teenager in proudly peaceable Canada during the romantic 1960s, I was a true believer in Bakunin's anarchism. I laughed off my parents' arguments that if government ever laid down its arms all hell would break loose.

Our competing predictions were put to the test ... when the Montreal police went on strike; ... city authorities had to call in the army and, of course, the Mounties to restore order. This decisive empirical test left my politics in tatters.

Dawkins presents this “just to weaken our confidence,” after arguing that “I dearly want to believe that I do not need such surveillance – and nor, dear reader, do you.” Needless to say, Dawkins makes the obvious point that “not everyone behaved badly as soon as the police were off the scene.” (229)

What does this example (and others like it) mean for anarchism? Surely this shows that governments are needed? Anarchists argue that it does not mean much. Few anarchists are remotely surprised that in such circumstances people take advantage of the lack of police and act in anti-social ways. Regardless of what the teenage Steven Pinker thought, anarchists do not think that simply removing government will transform the humans previously subject to it. Rather, we see anarchy coming from a process of social struggle and *not* being created “overnight” by chance or misfortune.

This issue has been addressed by anarchists for some time. Here is George Barrett's analysis of this issue from his excellent *Objections to Anarchism* (355). It is worth quoting in full:

Even if you could overthrow the government tomorrow and establish anarchism, the same system would soon grow up again.

This objection is quite true, except that we do not propose to overthrow the government tomorrow. If I (or we as a group of anarchists) came to the conclusion that I was to

be the liberator of humanity, and if by some means I could manage to blow up the King, the Houses of Lords and Commons, the police force, and, in a word, all persons and institutions which make up the government – if I were successful in all this, and expected to see the people enjoying freedom ever afterwards as a result, then, no doubt, I should find myself greatly mistaken.

The chief results of my action would be to arouse an immense indignation on the part of the majority of the people, and a re-organization by them of all the forces of government.

The reason why this method would fail is very easy to understand. It is because the strength of the government rests not with itself, but with the people. A great tyrant may be a fool, and not a superman. His strength lies not in himself, but in the superstition of the people who think that it is right to obey him. So long as that superstition exists it is useless for some liberator to cut off the head of tyranny; the people will create another, for they have grown accustomed to rely on something outside themselves.

Suppose, however, that the people develop, and become strong in their love of liberty, and self-reliant, then the foremost of its rebels will overthrow tyranny, and backed by the general sentiment of their age their action will never be undone. Tyranny will never be raised from the dead.

A landmark in the progress of humanity will have been passed and put behind for ever.

So the anarchist rebel when he strikes his blow at governments understands that he is no liberator with a divine mission to free humanity, but he is a part of that humanity struggling onwards towards liberty.

If, then, by some external means an Anarchist Revolution could be, so to speak, supplied ready-made and thrust upon the people, it is true that they would reject it and rebuild the old society. If, on the other hand, the people develop their ideas of freedom, and they themselves get rid of the last stronghold of tyranny – the government – then indeed the revolution will be permanently accomplished.

Elsewhere, Barrett addressed the same issue:

Even so it may be questioned: “What can we do? Smash up the institutions of today and what have we? Simply chaos until something similar is put in their place.”

This is true in one sense, but it is an argument that cannot be used against us. It is true that the various institutions of slavery which exist today are there because people upon whom they depend are slavish in their thoughts. If, therefore, some great hurricane swept through the country, destroying all such institutions and their leaders, it is quite certain that the people who still believed in such things would set to work to rebuild them. On the contrary, if this ‘hurricane’ took the form of a movement of the people themselves, who had outgrown their slavish attitude of mind, then there would be no restoration of the old, but a reconstruction on new and revolutionary lines. (*The Anarchist Revolution*, 15-6)

Given this, anarchists would not be surprised at the result of the police strike (though many police strikes have passed

without significant disorder) nor consider it a “empirical test” of anarchism. Perhaps Pinker was not aware of Barrett and his analysis, yet the same points can be found in a close reading of the anarchist he does mention, Bakunin.

Bakunin, like most anarchists, did not have a benign perspective on “human nature” (if we did then we would *not* be anarchists, as giving power to people would be unproblematic!). “All men,” he argued, “possess a natural instinct for power”; “we realize that power and authority corrupt those who exercise them as much as those who are compelled to submit to them.” (*The Political Philosophy of Bakunin*, 248 and 249) Given this, Bakunin would not have concluded that simply removing the police would suddenly transform those corrupted by authority into moral individuals nor made those who have never heard of anarchism into libertarians. He was well aware of the effect of environment on an individual’s development:

Everyone carries within himself the germs of this lust for power, and every germ ... must develop and grow, if only it finds in its environment favorable conditions. These conditions in human society are the stupidity, ignorance, apathetic indifference, and servile habits of the masses. (248)

How the police strike could have transformed the “habits of the masses” is left unexplained by Pinker, nor how it could have created appropriate “favorable conditions” to overcome centuries of hierarchical society. This is not to say that Bakunin thought that a free society was impossible or that people could not live without government or police. Rather, “to make men moral it is necessary to make their social environment moral.” Bakunin argued that three things are “necessary for men to become moral”: “birth under hygienic conditions”; “a rational and integral education accompanied by an upbringing based upon respect for work, reason, equality, and liberty”; and “a social environment wherein the human individual, enjoying full liberty, will be equal, in fact and by right, to all others.” (*Political Philosophy of Bakunin*, 155)

Need it be stressed that a police strike creates none of these preconditions? How can a police strike create such an environment, unless you assume that humans are unaffected by hierarchical social relations (a which Bakunin would have, rightly, mocked)?

How did Bakunin see as the means of getting from a bad social environment to a good one if the former ensures the impossibility of creating people able to live freely? By means of social struggle, through which people transform themselves by changing the world (which is why anarchists argue for self-liberation). “How can this ignorance be dissipated, how can these disastrous prejudices be destroyed?” asked Bakunin. By “only one way: That is complete solidarity in the struggle of workers against the employers,” that is “the way of a practical emancipation.” Strikes, for example, “awaken in the masses all the social-revolutionary instincts which reside deeply in the heart of every worker ... but which ordinarily are consciously perceived by very few workers, most of whom are weighed down by slavish habits and a general spirit of resignation.” However, “those instincts” are “stimulated by the economic struggle” and anarchist ideas can “find their way to the minds of the people” and “swiftly proceed toward their full actualization.” (*Political Philosophy of Bakunin*, 316 and 384) This struggle also creates the structural framework of a free society:

The organization of society through a free federation of workers’ associations – industrial and agricultural as well as scientific, artistic, and literary – first into a commune;

the federation of communes into regions, of regions into nations, and of nations into a fraternal international union. (410)

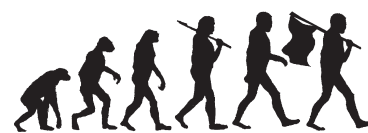
Thus anarchism is the struggle by the oppressed to ensure “to assert his rights.” Today, Bakunin stressed, “that struggle is taking place under the double aspect of exploitation by wage labor by capital, and of the political, juridical, civil, military, and police oppression by the State and Church.” (*Political Philosophy of Bakunin*, 248) In what way would a police strike have produced such a struggle? Such a transformation in those subject, and so degraded, by hierarchy? Such new social organizations in which people manage their own affairs? None, of course.

Nor did Bakunin (like all anarchists) consider a free society as being perfect after a revolution. He pointed to a “more or less prolonged transition period” and he was well aware that a free society would need to defend itself against those seeking to impose their authority on others (and what is genuine crime but that?). Thus, “in an intelligent, wide-awake society, jealously guarding its liberty and disposed to defend its rights, even the most egoistic and malevolent individual become good members of society. Such is the power of society, a thousand times greater than that of the strongest individuals.” (*Political Philosophy of Bakunin*, 412 and 249)

Anarchists, in other words, do not consider anarchism to need perfect people to work – quite the reverse. All we argue is that, after struggling for freedom, people will, in general, act in better ways than they do in unfree ones – as would be expected, given in the degrading effects of authoritarian social relationships and the empowering effects of revolt and freedom. If you like, freedom, and the struggle for freedom, encourages the better aspects of human nature to predominate and flourish while guarding against and minimizing the worse aspects.

It also seems strange that Pinker was surprised that looting took place – after all, any supporter of “Bakunin’s anarchism” would know that capitalist society is marked by massive inequalities, with wealth concentrated in the hands of a few. In such circumstances looting (i.e., individual expropriation of wealth) would be expected as people seek to take what they needed but could not afford. So, no looting (i.e., a respect for inequality and capitalist property rights) would be a surprise to anyone familiar with the anarchist critique of capitalism. This is *not* to suggest that looting is part of the anarchist program, far from it (expropriation should be social in nature, otherwise ownership is transferred rather than eliminated). The differences are explored in “Anarchy in Iraq?” (*Black Flag* # 223, 4-5), while “From Riot to Revolution” (*Black Flag* # 221, 20-4) goes into what is required to turn spontaneous revolts (“disorder”) into lasting change (anarchy).

Clearly, then, anarchists would not be surprised by the example of the Montreal police strike. This is because the so-called “anarchy” was imposed by an outside event rather than created in the process of a people fighting for their freedom. Moreover, even in revolutionary circumstances, anarchists would not be surprised if some individuals took advantage of the situation to



*Freedom, and the struggle for freedom, encourages the better aspects of human nature to predominate and flourish...*

loot, get revenge, and so on (as did happen, for example, immediately after the defeat of the military coup in Barcelona in July 1936). In addition, it should be noted that anarchists think that it is unlikely that anti-social behavior will totally disappear in a free society – it would just be greatly diminished.

Given time, it is likely that the police strike would have resulted in some form of community self-defense developing. After all, it would be strange if people did not try to stop those seeking to coerce them – people were doing so long before the police were created by the state. As Errico Malatesta argued, if people impose themselves by force then “they will be the government” and “we will oppose them with force,” for “if today we want to make a revolution against the government, it is not in order to submit ourselves supinely to new oppressors.” Anarchists, he continued, “believe that to act criminally means to violate the liberty of others” and so “when there remains a residue of criminals, the collective directly concerned should think of placing them in a position where they can do no harm, without delegating to anyone the specific function of persecuting criminals.” (*At the Cafe*, 99, 100 and 101)

Like Bakunin, Malatesta argued that all the bad passions ... will not disappear at a stroke. There will still be for a long time those who will feel tempted to impose their will on others with violence, who will wish to exploit favorable circumstances to create privileges for themselves, ... those who would encroach on personal integrity, liberty and the well being of others.

Hence “we will defend ourselves ... without delegating to anyone the special function of the defence of society”; this, he stressed, will be “the only effective method.” The fundamental problem was that “the major damage caused by crime is not so much the single and transitory instance of the violation of the rights of a few individuals, but the danger that it will serve as an opportunity and pretext for the constitution of an authority that, with the outward appearance of defending society will subdue and oppress it.” (*At the Cafe*, 131, 132 and 101) As is the case under the state today, where the police impose the wishes of the ruling elite and defend capitalist property rights well, while to various degrees (depending on their wealth), defending the rights of all within that framework.

Ultimately, the notion that anarchy is against free people defending themselves against those seeking to coerce them is a strange one. Engels subscribed to a variation of this fallacy when he proclaimed revolutions as authoritarian acts, so confusing the ending of coercion with coercion (against the coercers!). As Malatesta put it, some seem to suppose

that anarchists, in the name of their principles, would wish to see that strange freedom respected which violates and destroys the freedom and life of others. They seem almost to believe that after having brought down government and private property we would allow both to be quietly built up again, because of respect for the freedom of those who might feel the need to be rulers and property owners. A truly curious way of interpreting our ideas. (*Anarchy*, 42-3)

Finally, anarchists would point to a flaw in one of Dawkins’ own statements in *The God Delusion*. In his useful discussion, “Does our moral sense have a Darwinian Origin?” Dawkins summarizes how our ethics could be produced by natural selection rather than being imposed by an external being. He starts

by clearing up a common misunderstanding: “Isn’t goodness incompatible with the theory of the ‘selfish gene’? No. This is a common misunderstanding of the theory – a distressing (and, with hindsight, foreseeable) misunderstanding.” (215) After discussing altruism to relatives, he notes that the

other main type of altruism for which we have a well-worked-out Darwinian rationale is reciprocal altruism (“You scratch my back and I’ll scratch yours”). This theory, first introduced to evolutionary biology by Robert Trivers, ... does not depend upon shared genes. (216-7)

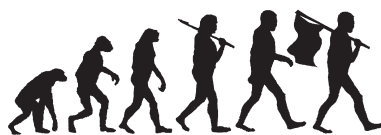
Anarchists would note that Trivers independently developed this theory a century after it had first been expounded, a theory better known in anarchist circles as “*mutual aid*” and developed by Kropotkin in his classic work of the same name. Kropotkin, while the best known defender of this theory, did not invent it – he popularized, with substantial evidence, a commonplace position in Russian scientific circles of the time (see Stephan Jay Gould’s excellent essay “Kropotkin was no Crackpot” in his book *Bully for Brontosaurus* for details).

Dawkins argues that reciprocal altruism produces cooperative behavior, and “between members of widely different species, when it is often called symbiosis” can lead to “mutualistic relationships” between species. (216-7) Kropotkin, however, concentrated on how animals of the same species cooperated and, like Trivers, advocated the same solution to why – it benefits those who do so. As Dawkins notes, it is based on the “strategy ‘Start out being nice, and give others the benefit of the doubt. Then repay good deeds with good, but avenge bad deeds.’” (217-8) A close reading of Kropotkin’s *Mutual Aid* shows the same process at work, with Kropotkin arguing that uncooperative ants would be penalized, that “selfish” ones would be “treated as an enemy, or worse.” For bees “anti-social instincts continue to exist” but “natural selection continually must eliminate them” as those with “predatory inclinations” would be “eliminated in favor of those who understand the advantages of sociable life and mutual support.” He generalized this to other species, such as birds and mammals. (*Mutual Aid*, 29, 32, 61 and 51) His anarchist works, it should be noted, also noted that un-cooperative individuals would be asked to leave any groups if they did not change their ways (for example, see Chapter 12, “Objections,” *Conquest of Bread*).

Kropotkin, it should be noted, had been discussing the evolutionary base for ethics since the early 1880s (see “Law and Authority,” *Words of a Rebel*). In the 1890s he wrote the essays refuting Dawkins hero Thomas Huxley’s arguments that human society was maintained *against* our natural instincts which became *Mutual Aid*. Echoes of Huxley’s position can be seen in Dawkins’ comments that while our ethics do have an evolutionary base, our wonderful “urge to kindness” is the result of a “misfiring” of our evolved need for reciprocal altruism, “the misfired consequence of ancestral village life.” (221 and 222) Anarchists would reply that there is no misfiring at all, but rather cooperation is in our best interests (both as individuals and as a society) regardless of the size of society we live in. That Dawkins does not mean anything negative by the term “*misfiring*” is beside the point as it, at root, suggests that there is no evolutionary value in doing so once a society reaches a certain level of complexity, that “selfish” behavior rather than cooperation is in our best interests. Again, this seems more an assumption driven by the surrounding capitalist environment than a serious evaluation of the evidence.

# The Malthusians

BY P.J. PROUDHON  
(ASR ANARCHIST CLASSICS SERIES)



Dr. Malthus, an economist, an Englishman, once wrote the following words:

A man who is born into a world already occupied, his family unable to support him, and society not requiring his labor, such a man, I say, has not the least legal right to claim any nourishment whatever; he is really one too many on the earth. At the great banquet of Nature there is no plate laid for him. Nature commands him to take himself away, and she will not be slow to put her order into execution.

As a consequence of this great principle, Malthus recommends, with the most terrible threats, every man who has neither labor nor income upon which to live to take himself away, or at any rate to have no more children. A family,—that is, love,—like bread, is forbidden such a man by Malthus.

Dr. Malthus was, while living, a minister of the Holy Gospel, a mild-mannered philanthropist, a good husband, a good father, a good citizen, believing in God as firmly as any man in France. He died (heaven grant him peace) in 1834. It may be said that he was the first, without doubt, to reduce to absurdity all political economy, and state the great revolutionary question, the question between labor and capital. With us, whose faith in Providence still lives, in spite of the century's indifference, it is proverbial—and herein consists the difference between the English and ourselves—that “everybody must live.” And our people, in saying this, think themselves as truly Christian, as conservative of good morals and the family, as the late Malthus.

Now, what the people say in France, the economists deny; the lawyers and the litterateurs deny; the Church, which pretends to be Christian, and also Gallican, denies; the press denies; the large proprietors deny; the government which endeavors to represent them, denies.

The press, the government, the Church, literature, economy, wealth—everything in France has become English; everything is Malthusian. It is in the name of God and his holy providence, in the name of morality, in the name of the sacred interests of the family, that they maintain that there is not room in the country for all the children of the country, and that they warn our women to be less prolific. In France, in spite of the desire of the people, in spite of the national belief, eating and drinking are regarded as privileges, labor a privilege, family a privilege, country a privilege.

M. Antony Thouret said recently that property, without which there is neither country, nor family, nor labor, nor morality, would be irreproachable as soon as it should cease to be a privilege; a clear statement of the fact that, to abolish all the privileges which, so to speak, exclude a portion of the people from the law, from humanity, we must abolish, first of all, the fundamental privilege, and change the constitution of property.

M.A. Thouret, in saying that, agreed with us and with the people. The State, the press, political economy, do not view the matter in that light; they agree in the hope that property, without which, as M. Thouret says, there is no labor, no family, no Republic, may remain what it always has been—a privilege.

All that has been done, said, and printed today and for the last twenty years, has been done, said, and printed in consequence of the theory of Malthus.

The theory of Malthus is the theory of political murder; of murder from motives of philanthropy and for love of God. There are too many people in the world; that is the first article of faith of all those who, at present, in the name of the people,

reign and govern. It is for this reason that they use their best efforts to diminish the population. Those who best acquit themselves of this duty, who practice with piety, courage, and fraternity the maxims of Malthus, are good citizens, religious men, those who protest against such conduct are anarchists, socialists, atheists.

That the Revolution of February was the result of this protest constitutes its inexpiable crime. Consequently, it shall be taught its business, this Revolution which promised that all should live. The original, indelible stain on this Republic is that the people have pronounced it anti-Malthusian. That is why the Republic is so especially obnoxious to those who were, and would become again, the toadies and accomplices of kings—*grand eaters of men*, as Cato called them. They would make monarchy of your Republic; they would devour its children.

There lies the whole secret of the sufferings, the agitations, and the contradictions of our country.

The economists are the first among us, by an inconceivable blasphemy, to establish as a providential dogma the theory of Malthus. I do not reproach them; neither do I abuse them. On this point the economists act in good faith and from the best intentions in the world. They would like nothing better than to make the human race happy; but they cannot conceive how, without some sort of an organization of homicide, a balance between population and production can exist.

Ask the Academy of Moral Sciences. One of its most honorable members, whose name I will not call—though he is proud of his opinions, as every honest man should be—being the prefect of I know not which department, saw fit one day, in a proclamation, to advise those within his province to have thenceforth fewer children by their wives. Great was the scandal among the priests and gossips, who looked upon this academic morality as the morality of swine! The *savant* of whom I speak was none the less, like all his fellows, a zealous defender of the family and of morality; but, he observed with Malthus, at the banquet of Nature there is not room for all.

M. Thiers, also a member of the Academy of Moral Sciences, lately told the committee on finance that, if he were minister, he would confine himself to *courageously and stoically passing through the crisis*, devoting himself to the expenses of his budget, enforcing a respect for order, and carefully guarding against every financial innovation, every socialistic idea—especially such as the right to labor—as well as every revolutionary expedient. And the whole committee applauded him.

In giving this declaration of the celebrated historian and statesman, I have no desire to accuse his intentions. In the present state of the public mind, I should succeed only in serving the ambition of M. Thiers, if he has any left. What I wish to call attention to is that M. Thiers, in expressing himself in this wise, testified, perhaps unconsciously, to his faith in Malthus.

Mark this well, I pray you. There are two millions, four millions of men who will die of misery and hunger, if some means be not found of giving them work. This is a great misfortune, surely, and we are the first to lament it, the Malthusians tell you; but what is to be done? It is better that four millions of men should die than that privilege should be compromised; it is not the fault of capital, if labor is idle; at the banquet of credit there

is not room for all.

They are courageous, they are stoical, these statesmen of the school of Malthus, when it is a matter of sacrificing laborers by the millions. Thou hast killed the poor man, said the prophet Elias to the king of Israel, and then thou hast taken away his inheritance. *Occidisti et possedisti*. To-day we must reverse the phrase, and say to those who possess and govern: You have the privilege of labor, the privilege of credit, the privilege of property, as M. Thouret says; and it is because you do not wish to be deprived of these privileges, that you shed the blood of the poor like water: *Possedisti et occidisti*!

And the people, under the pressure of bayonets, are being eaten slowly; they die without a sigh or a murmur; the sacrifice is effected in silence. Courage, laborers! sustain each other: Providence will finally conquer fate. Courage! the condition of your fathers, the soldiers of the republic, at the sieges of Genes and Mayence, was even worse than yours.

M. Leon Faucher, in contending that journals should be forced to furnish securities and in favoring the maintenance of taxes on the press, reasoned also after the manner of Malthus. The serious journal, said he, the journal that deserves consideration and esteem, is that which is established on a capital of from four to five hundred thousand francs. The journalist who has only his pen is like the workman who has only his arms. If he can find no market for his services or get no credit with which to carry on his enterprise, it is a sign that public opinion is against him; he has not the least right to address the country: at the banquet of public life there is not room for all.

Listen to Lacordaire, that light of the Church, that chosen vessel of Catholicism. He will tell you that socialism is antichrist. And why is socialism antichrist? Because socialism is the enemy of Malthus, whereas Catholicism, by a final transformation, has become Malthusian.

The gospel tells us, cries the priest, that there will always be poor people, *Pauperes semper habebitis vobiscum*, and that property, consequently in so far as it is a privilege and makes poor people, is sacred. Poverty is necessary to the exercise of evangelical charity; at the banquet of this world here below there cannot be room for all.

He feigns ignorance, the infidel, of the fact that *poverty*, in Biblical language, signified every sort of affliction and pain, not hard times and the condition of the proletariat. And how could he who went up and down Judea crying, *Woe to the rich!* be understood differently? In the thought of Jesus Christ, woe to the rich means woe to the Malthusians.

If Christ were living today, he would say to Lacordaire and his companions: "You are of the race of those who, in all ages, have shed the blood of the just, from Abel unto Zacharias. Your law is not my law; your God is not my God!" ... And the Lacordaires would crucify Christ as a seditious person and an atheist.

Almost the whole of journalism is infected with the same ideas. Let *Le National*, for example, tell us whether it has not always believed, whether it does not still believe, that pauperism is a permanent element of civilization; that the enslavement of one portion of humanity is necessary to the glory of another; that those who maintain the contrary are dangerous dreamers who deserve to be shot; that such is the basis of the State. For, if this be not the secret thought of *Le National*, if *Le National*

sincerely and resolutely desires the emancipation of laborers, why these anathemas against, why this anger with, the genuine socialists—those who, for ten and twenty years, have demanded this emancipation?

Further, let the Bohemian of literature, today the myrmidons of Journalism, paid slanderers, courtiers of the privileged classes, eulogists of all the vices, parasites living upon other parasites, who prate so much of God only to dissemble their materialism, of the family only to conceal their adulteries, and whom we shall see, out of disgust for marriage, caressing monkeys when Malthusian women fail—let these, I say, publish their economic creed, in order that the people may know them. ...

The government was inspired by Malthus when, having a hundred thousand laborers at its disposal, to whom it gave gratuitous support, it refused to employ them at useful labor, and when, after the civil war, it asked that a law be passed for their transportation. With the expenses of the pretended national workshops, with the costs of war, lawsuits, imprisonment, and transportation, it might have given the insurgents six months income, and thus changed our whole economic system. But labor is a monopoly; the government does not wish revolutionary industry to compete with privileged industry; at the workbench of the nation there is not room for all.

Large industrial establishments ruin small ones; that is the law of capital, that is Malthus. Wholesale trade gradually swallows the retail; again Malthus. Large estates encroach upon and consolidate the smallest possessions: still Malthus.

Soon one half of the people will say to the other:

The earth and its products are my property.

Industry and its products are my property.

Commerce and transportation are my property.

The State is my property.

You who possess nether reserve nor property, who hold no public offices and whose labor is useless to us, TAKE YOURSELVES AWAY! You have really no business on the earth; beneath the sunshine of the Republic there is not room for all.

Who will tell me that the right to labor and to live is not the whole of the Revolution?

Who will tell me that the principle of Malthus is not the whole of the counter-Revolution?

And it is for having published such things as these—for having exposed the evil boldly and sought the remedy in good faith, that speech has been forbidden me by the government, the government that represents the Revolution!

That is why I have been deluged with the slanders, treacheries, cowardice, hypocrisy, outrages, desertions, and failings of all those who hate or love the people! That is why I have been given over; for a whole month, to the mercy of the jackals of the press and the screech-owls of the platform! Never was a man, either in the past or in the present, the object of so much execration as I have become, for the simple reason that I wage war upon cannibals.

To slander one who could not reply was to shoot a prisoner. Malthusian carnivora, I discover you there! Go on, then; we have more than one account to settle yet. And, if calumny is not sufficient for you, use iron and lead. You may kill me; no one can avoid his fate, and I am at your discretion. But you shall not conquer me; you shall never persuade the people, while I live and hold a pen, that, with the exception of yourselves, there is one too many on the earth. I swear it before the people and in the name of the Republic!

## The Roots of Anarcho-Syndicalism in Catalonia

REVIEW BY MARTIN COMACK

Angel Smith, **Anarchism, Revolution and Reaction: Catalan Labour and the Crisis of the Spanish State, 1898-1923**. Berghahn Books, 405 pages, \$89.95, hardcover.

It is a persistent myth kept alive by Marxist historians that anarchism and syndicalism are “petit bourgeois” ideologies, espoused only by backward peasants, displaced artisans and incoherent intellectuals. Angel Smith’s detailed study of the beginnings of the Spanish labor movement, centered in Barcelona, is yet another refutation of this willful distortion of history.

In the short but intense period of the Spanish Revolution, in the midst of civil war in the months of 1936 and early ‘37, the working class of Catalonia created perhaps the most egalitarian society of the modern era. Without government interference, through the socialization of production and distribution carried out through organs of direct democracy – workplace committees, neighborhood assemblies and a popular militia – Barcelona and its environs, in the words of the visitor George Orwell, was “a town where the working class was in the saddle, ... a state of affairs worth fighting for.” Even the Bolshevik Leon Trotsky admitted that the political and cultural level of the Spanish proletariat exceeded that of the Russian revolutionary workers of 1917.

This new ordering of society and social relations, emerging in the reaction to a fascist coup and ensuing civil conflict, was itself the product of previous decades of experience in class warfare, rank-and-file organization, and resistance to official repression led by the anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists of Spain’s most industrialized province.

Smith begins his narrative at the turn of the twentieth century and the beginnings of an explicitly revolutionary workers movement heavily influenced by libertarian and syndicalist ideas. What is notable in the author’s chronicle of twenty-five years of often brutal class conflict is the remarkable persistence and tenacity of the Catalan workers in organizing and reorganizing themselves after strikes, riots and lockouts – win or lose – and their willingness to repay employer violence with violence of their own. From affinity groups they moved on to union-based organization, adopting the ideology and tactics of direct action. And this in the face of a hostile state that aimed at marginalizing the influence of the lower classes in Spanish society and political life. Officially founded in 1910, by 1919 the anarcho-syndicalist Confederación Nacional del Trabajo (National Labor Confederation) could claim some 500,000 Spanish workers, most of them in Catalonia, and was able to mobilize far beyond its paid-up and fluctuating membership base.

In this atmosphere the policies of other radicals like the Spanish Socialists had but limited appeal; in Barcelona their organization was almost totally eclipsed. The Socialist unions were far more bureaucratic, concerned with formal politics, and were considered too moderate in attempting to negotiate with even the most recalcitrant employers. The CNT was able to attract both male and female workers at all skill levels across various industries because of its democratic structure, emphasis upon local control, aggressive concentration upon immediate goals and concrete issues, and not least because of the intransigent

and reactionary policies of the Catalan employing class and the Spanish state.

Anxious to win the support of the Catalan middle classes for the central government, Spain’s authoritarian regime was quite concerned with both the liberal reformist and separatist movements within the province. Both Spanish and Catalan were spoken by all social classes. Many middle class reformers and republicans were federalists, advocating provincial autonomy within a Spanish republic. Catalan autonomists went even further, espousing what Smith calls an “anti-state nationalism” hostile to centralized authority. Thus Catalan culture in general retained something of a libertarian strain. While many (if not all) within the bourgeois republican left opposed strikes and violent class warfare, others viewed the organized working class as a powerful force to aid in achieving at least the reform of Spain’s political structure.

Smith takes issue with those historians who have attributed the militancy and fervor of the anarcho-syndicalists and the CNT in Catalonia to the regular influx of peasants from the surrounding rural provinces. Presumably, their bitter experiences as landless laborers or small farmers oppressed by the big landlords left them with an innate radicalism that they carried into their new urban environment, reinvigorating the labor movement. Smith, however, finds no particular indication that the uprooted migrants were any more or less inclined to militant activity or insurrection than the established industrial proletariat. Indeed, he indicates that immigration from the countryside may have actually helped to preserve to some extent more conservative social mores and traditional ideas among the working classes of Barcelona.

Nor does the author take the generally accepted view that anarcho-syndicalism in Catalonia, and in Spain at large, was a unique and singular phenomenon. “Syndicalism,” he notes, “attained considerable influence on both the American and European continents until at least 1914 and there was a marked similarity between this movement and pro-union Catalan anarchist currents” (5).

Smith’s narrative ends in 1923, when Spain’s conservative and elitist constitutional monarchy was overthrown by General Primo de Rivera, ushering in a period of personal dictatorship supported by the collaborationist Socialists. The CNT would be driven underground, repression encouraging the more insurrectionary elements in the organization to engage in urban guerrilla tactics while the more “moderate” of the *cenetistas* fought to preserve union organization. The CNT would emerge again with the coming of the Second Republic as the most powerful revolutionary force in Spain, but soon would find itself caught in the deadly crossfire of fascists and Stalinists.

## Magon and the Mexican Revolution

REVIEW BY MIKE HARGIS

Chaz Bufe and Mitchell Cohen Verter, editors, **Dreams of Freedom: A Ricardo Flores Magon Reader**. AK Press, 420 pages.

*Dreams of Freedom* includes a biographical sketch of Ricardo Flores Magon (FLM) and his and the Partido Liberal Mexicano’s (PLM) role in the Mexican Revolution. There is also a very useful chronology as well as several maps to assist the reader in situating the writings in place and time.

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Included in these writings is the 1906 Program of the PLM, which is as advertised a liberal program calling for things like universal suffrage, an 8-hour day, public secular education, term limits, etc. Although FLM, along with his brother Enrique and his close comrades Praxedes Guerrero and Manuel Sarabia, developed an increasingly anarchist-communist political position, they continued to agitate for the 1906 PLM program until 1910-11 when millionaire hacendado Francisco I. Madero led an insurrection that succeeded in toppling dictator Porfirio Díaz. Following the 1910 revolution the PLM issued its more-or-less openly anarchist-communist Manifesto of September 23, 1911, calling for expropriation of the land and capital and the abolition of exploitation.

Although Ricardo had developed an anarchist-communist direction prior to 1910, he continued to urge his comrades in the Organizing Junta to continue to present their ideas as “Liberal” so as not to scare off workers and campesinos who had been prejudiced against anarchism by bourgeois propaganda. This dissembling did not prevent some PLM forces from going over to Madero, however. Magon was criticized for this opportunism by some anarchists in Europe at the time.

The last gasp for the PLM was the insurrection in Baja California in 1911, although Magonismo continued to exert influence on other revolutionary forces, from the syndicalists of the Casa del Obrero Mundo to the agrarians of Emiliano Zapata. The revolution in Baja is interesting in that it gained the support of the international anarchist and syndicalist movements, in particular members of the IWW. The revolution, however, did not get the support of the broader socialist movement in the U.S., which threw in its lot with Madero. The revolution also suffered from the participation of a number of soldiers of fortune who hoped to use the movement to pad their bank accounts and even annex Baja to the United States. The unfortunate participation of these *filibusterers* in the movement gave ammunition to its enemies and contributed to its defeat. Also, the role of the United States and the State governments of Texas, Arizona and California in working to disrupt the activities of the PLM cannot be ignored.

This anthology reveals Ricardo Flores Magon to be primarily an agitator and organizer rather than an original thinker. His anarchism is very much in the Bakuninist tradition, emphasizing the right to rebel, the necessity (one almost wants to say therapeutic necessity) for violence (pacifist anarchists would not have been happy with Ricardo), expropriation, distrust of leaders, hatred of exploitation, etc. AK Press and the editors of this volume (Chaz Bufe and Mitchell Cowen Verter) have done a great service for those interested in the histories of anarchism, Mexico and revolution in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

## Bombers, Then and Now

REVIEW BY MIKE LONG

John Merriman, *The Dynamite Club. How a bombing in fin-de-siècle Paris ignited the age of modern terror.* Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2009. 259 pages.

In his room on the edge of Paris, Émile Henry was preparing a bomb. He took a worker's metal lunch box, broke off the handle and lid, and placed a cartridge of dynamite inside. He then filled a zinc tube with 120 pieces of buck-

shot, adding green powder and pitric acid to make a deadly mix. In a small opening in the tube, he put a capsule of mercury fulminate, along with a fuse that would burn for fifteen to eighteen seconds, which he attached with sealing wax. The fuse protruded from the screw hole that had once secured the handle. Having soldered the tin container and wrapped wire around it, Émile put the bomb, which weighed about five pounds, in a deep pocket of his overcoat. He then armed himself with a loaded pistol and a knife, and walked out the door. It was February 12, 1894.

So begins John Merriman's brilliant new work, *The Dynamite Club*. And so it continues, for 216 pages of superbly researched, beautifully written, detailed, gripping narrative, plus eight pages of old photographs and drawings of major players and locations, and 40 pages of acknowledgments, notes, references and an index.

Merriman is a professor of history at Yale, and author of several books and articles about social conditions and class politics in 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century France. In *The Dynamite Club*, we have an unusual combination of serious scholarship delivered in a style that is not just accessible for the lay reader, which it certainly is, but flows like a detective story. Obviously fluent in French, and already an expert on French life of the period, Merriman conducted extensive research into police records and newspaper pieces of the day for this book, but did not stop there. He visited key places and buildings in Henry's life and walked the streets of present-day Paris, retracing Henry's exact routes, carefully timing his itinerary, much like detectives of the time, to see whether he could have planted earlier bombs, as he was suspected of doing. He has an eye for detail, and it is often the details that bring the story to life, but they are never allowed to weigh the narrative down.

The book's main protagonist is Émile Henry – along with François-Claudius Ravachol, who also figures prominently – one of anarchism's most notorious practitioners of propaganda by the deed. The story is far broader and deeper than the violence, itself, however, and is anything but the standard indictment of “terrorists.” Rather, Merriman is interested in what makes bombers (ahem) tick:

This book is motivated by a very simple question: why did Émile Henry do what he did? Getting inside the mind of a bomber is no easy task, especially when the bombing took place over a century ago and halfway around the world. But for a historian in the early twenty-first century, the temptation is irresistible. Embroiled in our own “war on terror,” it may well be instructive to look at the past for insight. (3)

Merriman recounts the familiar tale of the February 12 Café Terminus bombing, and lesser known attacks in which Henry had been involved in the preceding two years. His were a tiny fraction of the waves of bombings in Paris, Barcelona (“the city of bombs”), Andalusia, and elsewhere at the time, as well as stabbings and assassinations of heads of state. The bombings and threats of violence were so frequent and widespread that politicians and the popular press spoke of organized plots by a so-called “dynamite club,” despite the fact that the great majority of anarchists, the “associationalists,” opposed the use of violence advocated by the “individualists,” and despite evidence that serious acts were generally perpetrated by individuals acting alone or with just one or two accomplices, not as members of a vast

network of conspirators.

Merriman provides a brief but informative and sympathetic account of Henry's background. Émile's father, Fortuné Henry, had been a socialist activist, imprisoned more than once for his pains, and a leading militant in the French Commune, sentenced to death in absentia after he fled to Barcelona (Poble Nou), where he became active in the Catalan anarchist movement and where his three sons were born. Émile was the second of the three brothers, all of whom later became anarchists. Following the 1879 amnesty for the Communards, the family returned to the village of Brévannes, near Paris, where his mother ran a tiny three-room auberge. Fortuné had contracted mercury poisoning at his workplace in Barcelona, and died in 1882, when Émile was ten.

Émile had proved himself a very promising young pupil in Barcelona, and continued that way in France, first locally, and then on a scholarship at a school on the outskirts of Paris. He received his baccalaureate in science, with honors, four days before his sixteenth birthday, passing exams in mathematics, physics and chemistry, including a question about the detonating properties of chlorine. At 17, however, he abruptly dropped out of school and accompanied his uncle to Italy to work as an assistant on a civil engineering contract. After a few months, he moved back to Paris, where, at age 19, a relatively well-educated bourgeois, he was reduced to working in a series of menial dead-end jobs, sometimes forced to abandon the tiny garrets in which he lived to keep one step ahead of the rent collector. Horrified and outraged by the exploitation, massive unemployment and desperate poverty he saw around him, and which he was experiencing himself, he would often give what little food or money he had to starving strangers – adults and, especially, children he met on the streets – or, when he could, offer them shelter for the night.

Paris had a population of 2.5 million, many of them recent arrivals from the French countryside and elsewhere in Europe. Merriman offers a moving description of the appalling social conditions (similar to those in most of Europe at the time, or in modern-day Gaza). This was a time, moreover, when bitter memories of the brutal state repression of the Paris Commune were still fresh in people's minds. Anarchist newspapers had readerships in the thousands, as did anarchist pamphlets. Among the better-known papers were Jean Grave's *La Révolte* (c. 7,000 copies per week), Émile Pouget's *Père Peinard* (c. 8,000 copies a week, with each copy reaching five people, by police estimates), and Zo d'Axa's *L'Endehors* ('On the outside,' c. 6,000 copies). A number of artists, such as the painters Gustave Courbet, Paul Signac, Henri Toulouse-Lautrec, Camille Pissaro, and Kees van Dongen, and writers, including Émile Zola, Adolphe Retté, Paul Adam, Laurent Tailhade, Félix Fénéon and Octave Mirbeau were sympathetic to, and in several cases, active in, the cause.<sup>1</sup>

According to police estimates, Merriman reports, about 13 anarchist groups operated in Paris in 1882, with 200 or more members. By 1893, there were approximately 2,400 anarchists living there, of whom 852 were considered dangerous. The groups were typically organized by neighborhood, often sporting colorful names, including the Dynamitards. In the mid-1880s, the poor working-class suburb of Belleville and the twentieth arrondissement, for example, were home to the Libertarians, Black Flag, Tiger, Deserters of Charonne, the Anarchist Group of Belleville, the Anarchist Group of Père Lachaise (Cemetery), Dynamite, Revolver

in Hand, Starving, Hatred, Social War, and the Indigent. At least 25 groups operated in Montmartre between 1880 and 1896, and there were many more in other French towns and major European cities, notably London, where Henry would later flee for a while after his first major involvement in a bombing.

Although remaining somewhat of a loner, the young man immersed himself in the anarchist milieu, occasionally attending public meetings, becoming an ever-more-passionate believer in the cause, and devoting most of his waking hours to political activity of one kind or another. His growing militancy coincided with rapidly increasing industrial applications of a recent development in chemistry that would empower Ravachol, Henry and others like him, and strike terror in the hearts of ruling elites everywhere.

Dynamite had been invented by the Swedish chemist and manufacturer Alfred Nobel (he of the prizes), and patented by him in 1867. Its value was quickly recognized by mining and construction companies, and armies, among others, and Nobel became very rich. Its potential was not lost on anarchists, either, in Europe and the USA, notably August Spies, Lucy Parsons and the "apostle of dynamite," Johann Most. On February 21, 1885, the following appeared in Parson's *Alarm*:

Dynamite! Of all the good stuff! Stuff several pounds of this sublime stuff into an inch pipe (gas or water pipe), plug up both ends, insert a cap with a fuse attached, place this in the immediate vicinity of a lot of rich loafers who live by the sweat of other people's brows, and light the fuse. A most cheerful and gratifying result will follow. In giving dynamite to the downtrodden millions of the globe science has done its best work. ... A pound of this good stuff beats a bushel of ballots all hollow – and don't you forget it! (Adamic, 1931, 32)<sup>2</sup>

One February night in 1892, Ravachol and several other anarchists liberated 30 kilos of dynamite, over a thousand capsules, and 200 yards of fuse from a quarry outside Paris. A series of bombings began soon afterwards. Thefts of dynamite from the factories that produced it became common in the ensuing months and years.

Unlike the way Henry and the rest are often portrayed (even in some anarchist writings), Merriman is at pains to understand his and the other anarchist bombers' motives, which he presents as resulting in altruistic, rather than gratuitous, acts of violence, requiring courage and involving considerable, often the ultimate, personal sacrifice. While the book focuses first and foremost on Émile Henry, Merriman gives space to several of the period's best-known exponents of propaganda by the deed, including Ravachol (an inspiration for Henry), Auguste Vaillant, Théodule Meunier, and the Belgian, Pauwels. All except Henry were minimally educated, working-class (when they could find work), desperately poor, and, like Henry, committed anarchists. All had been led to adopt extreme measures by the outrageous wealth and depravity of the upper classes, on the one hand, the massive unemployment, grinding poverty and state oppression suffered by their own class, on the other, and the seeming absence of viable alternatives.

Like Ravachol, Merriman shows, Henry was rational, clear about his goals, and certain of the righteousness of his methods. He read and was influenced by Kropotkin, Bakunin, Malatesta, Faure (who he knew personally), and Reclus, the anarchist newspapers and tracts of the day, and very much by Ravachol's

statements after his arrest, and calls for revenge in the anarchist press after his execution. An example of the lucidity and focus was his response to an article by Malatesta in *L'Endehors*, for which Henry was working at the time. Following Ravachol's exploits, Malatesta published 'A little theory' in the paper on August 21, 1892, condemning propaganda by the deed and warning that "hate does not produce love, and by hate one cannot remake the world." He predicted that violence would only produce worse repression. And, indeed, draconian laws passed in France in December 1893 made anarchism or any connection with it – potentially, even knowing an anarchist – a crime; similar legislation and harsh repression of anarchists following in both Italy and Spain in 1894. Henry responded angrily in a long letter in *L'Endehors* a week later, claiming that Malatesta's condemnation contradicted his previous position that violent revolution was imminent and inevitable, and that all acts that promoted it were good. He argued that hatred for the ruling classes was healthy, so long as it was based on noble sentiments, not envy. "To those who say 'hate does not generate love,' I respond that it is love, a burning love, which often generates hate." The "right of insurrection" trumped all other rights.

As indicated by the book's sub-title, "How a bombing in fin-de-siècle Paris ignited the age of modern terror," Merriman sees a connection between Henry and today's "terrorists." He spends very little time on the connection, however, and most of that is implicit, so I'll make it explicit. So-called terrorists in the Middle East do not simply wake up one day and say to themselves, "I think I'll blow up a bank, a bus-terminus, a café, a police station, or an Israel check-point. Now, where did I put that nitro-glycerin?" To a great extent, they are created by life experience – grinding poverty, hunger, blatant injustice, witnessing unarmed family members and friends gunned down by occupying foreign troops, and men, women and children slaughtered by "smart bombs" fired from US and Israeli drones. They are created by social conditions – no schools, no hospitals, no land, no jobs, no shelter, no food, no water – not just today, but for decades. They are created by the seeming absence of options – no passport, no freedom of movement, no viable civil leaders, no meaningful outside support, no way out, no hope – in short, by despair.

There is a flourishing academic and commercial literature on the minds of today's suicide bombers in Iraq, Afghanistan, Israel and elsewhere. Some of it reflects a serious attempt to understand what motivates the actors. Much of it, however, is thinly disguised U.S. and Israeli propaganda, which presents all bombers (Arab, not U.S. or Israeli, bombers, that is) as psychologically disturbed individuals, driven by sex, a need to retrieve family honor or avenge dead family members, and so on, or as simpletons corrupted by malicious dispatchers – never as politically motivated, never as *responding* to the state terror inflicted on them *for generations*.<sup>3</sup> It will always be difficult to bring peace to the Middle East with this sort of grotesque vilification and demonization of "the enemy" disseminated daily by well-funded state media in Israel and the USA. Conversely, in addition to providing a first-rate account of an important period in anarchist history, Merriman's serious attempt to get inside the mind of Émile Henry might just help.

#### ★ Notes:

1. In Zola's novel *Germinal* (1885), Souvarine, a Russian anarchist blows up a mine. Zola warns "the masters of society to take

heed. ... Take care, look beneath the earth, see these wretches who work and suffer. There is perhaps still time to avoid the ultimate catastrophe." In his *Paris* (1898), the anarchist Guillaume Froment considers blowing up a variety of symbols of the French state, eventually settling on the Sacré-Coeur. Another character in the book, Victor Mathis, seems to have been modeled on Henry.

2. A full account of North-American radicals' love affair with chemistry down the years can be found in Louis Adamic's wonderful *Dynamite: The story of class violence in America* (New York, 1931). A revised edition was published in 1934, and recently republished by AK Press with a new introduction by ASR editorial collective member Jon Bekken.

3. A particularly insidious example is a book by an ex-Lt. Colonel in the Israeli Army turned criminologist, Anat Berko, *The Path to Paradise: The inner world of suicide bombers and their dispatchers* (recently translated into English and published by Potomac Books, 2009). Rather than waste time and money on the book, for a free sample (but only if seated close to a toilet) Google the appalling Ruthie Blum Leibowitz's "interview" of Berko, 'One on one with Anat Berko: What makes human bombs tick?' in the June 28, 2007, *Jerusalem Post*. The interview is a carefully orchestrated portrayal of Palestinian terrorism as *uniformly* the product of deranged minds and psychologically disturbed individuals, with not an ounce of political awareness in their heads, and no adverse life experiences at the hands of the Israeli state to motivate them.

## French workers resist economic crisis

*continued from page 46*

### "Bossnapping"

Meanwhile French workers have utilized other means to make the bosses pay for layoffs. On March 12, the 311 workers of the Sony videotape factory at Pontonx-sur-l'Adour, in southwest France, seized the head of Human Resources, Mr. Foucher, when he came to pay a last visit to the factory, which was scheduled to close its doors forever April 17. The workers blockaded the factory while 20 gendarmes surrounded the site but did not intervene.

Workers were upset at the severance package being offered, complaining that it was 50 percent below the package given to laid-off workers at a plant in Alsace last year. Sony offered one month of salary for each year worked, and nothing extra for workers over age 55. Workers held Mr. Foucher for 24 hours before letting him go in exchange for promises of negotiations.

There have been several other incidents of "bossnapping" in the past year. Last year, an Englishman running a car parts factory in eastern France was held for 48 hours. In a separate incident, 14 people were injured when police stormed an ice cream plant to free a manager who was taken hostage. More recently, on March 25, workers at a pharmaceutical factory held their boss in his office for two days to force him to improve their redundancy packages.

In another sign of growing labor unrest, angry workers from the Continental tire firm burst into a management meeting in the Champagne town of Reims and pelted their bosses with eggs to protest the closure of their plant.

## Letter: Class Struggle Anarchist Conference

I regret that you had problems at the Class Struggle Anarchist Conference in New York last summer (ASR 51, pp. ). I went out of my way to get you invited and wanted you to make more of a contribution. I also hoped older people would forget 20-year-old arguments and focus on the present.

I hoped the conference would (1) create a dialogue between serious, organization-oriented anarchists ("Class Struggle Anarchists") and anarchist organizations and (2) provide a forum for information exchange. On the latter point, race and gender issues were considered material aspects of the class war.

Personally, I am now unemployed. But I was able to scare up money for a bus ticket and food and given places to sleep with NEFAC (NorthEastern Federation of Anarchist Communists) comrades and at Catholic Worker House. I thought the conference was valuable and productive.

On another note, I wish you would fact check before making accusations. I have been with the Workers Solidarity Alliance for three years helping them update their political statement, constitution and web page. I know of no conspiracy against the Industrial Workers of the World by the WSA. In fact, several new WSA members are current or former IWW members and I am hoping to help IWW truck driver organizers in Virginia and North Carolina (haven't heard back from them yet). I am helping to organize a Virginia Anarchist Federation which is working with other groups like immigrant rights activists and would help your IWW organizers if they aren't afraid of "self-proclaimed anarchists."

I tried to work with the IWW in Los Angeles and wrote some literature for them, but it was hard to get them to do labor organizing. One guy quit after they wanted to name the LA General Membership Branch after Ricardo Flores Magón because Magón was "violent" (in the Mexican Revolution!). The LA group wasted a lot of time discussing liberal activist BS unrelated to labor organizing or support. I was disappointed. I am glad the IWW has had more success in other parts of the country.

I am still writing and have produced several flyers on anarcho-syndicalism (see the Zine Library web page). I also subscribe to ASR. My anarcho-syndicalism is about creating worker self-management in the workplace and the community. The social revolution will take time and cooperation to organize. We need to get a lot more people involved. I hope you won't alienate me or my comrades over personal BS which we had nothing to do with.

Name withheld by request, Virginia

**Response:** This letter was addressed to Jon Bekken, who attended the conference and wrote our brief critique last issue; we asked the author if he wished to see it published, and he said yes. We have long-standing political disagreements with WSA that go back to before its founding (and ours). The primary difference is over the importance of revolutionary unionism (which we believe is at the heart of anarcho-syndicalism); a difference that has historically manifested itself in LWG/WSA's bitter hostility against the IWW, leading to a campaign of slander and disruption condemned by the IWW in a public statement issued in 1986 at the direction of the union's annual General Assembly. (More recently, WSA has abandoned this campaign, perhaps because it left them isolated and marginalized. Certainly there has been no public reckoning of

this history; rather WSA has vigorously denied the facts, counting on people's reluctance to take the time to consult the evidence to put this across.) There can be no question as to our facts; we have hundreds of pages in our files documenting LWG/WSA's efforts to disrupt the IWW's international relations, to cite just one example. This history of vicious sectarianism continues to haunt the organization, which has never come to terms with its past – or indeed seriously considered how anarcho-syndicalism can be pursued in today's workplaces (instead, they have sought to evade such questions with quasi-Councilist rhetoric).

I attended the Conference prepared to leave WSA's history of sectarianism to the side. However, as I noted in my brief report, I was troubled by the conference's purely token reflection of the class struggle, and the ways issues such as gender and race were treated as counterposed to and in conflict with a syndicalist approach. I intervened repeatedly, but it seemed most presenters were entirely uninterested in trying to forge a class struggle-based approach to these oppressions. When the two WSA members on the day's closing panel engaged in outright lies about their historical approach, that was the last straw. I was prepared, as I said, to see this history ignored. ASR decided years ago that there was little point in rehashing this history. But it is one thing not to confront or acknowledge history; it is another thing altogether to falsify events, particular when those events fanned the flames of sectarianism and deepened fissures in the international movement that persist to this day. There are many, many syndicalists who refuse to work with WSA because of its history (and its refusal to acknowledge and learn from it).

— Jon Bekken

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## Hierarchy & nature...

notes, continued from page 24

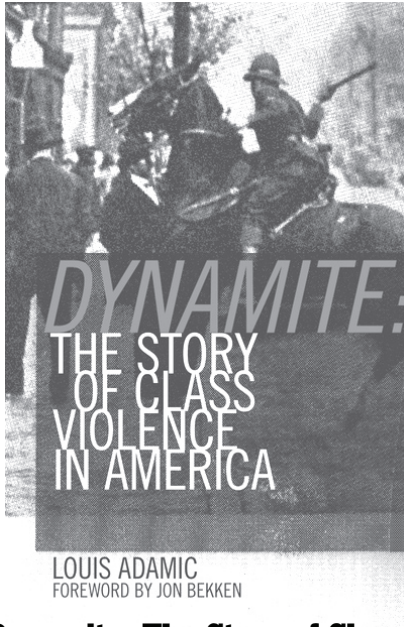
the ideas of Geedes, Verworn, Hertwig, Van Beneden, etc., upon the issue of cytoplasmic inheritance.

**8.** Kropotkin, *Evolution and Environment*, Black Rose Books, 1995, 194, 192, 241. **9.** *Evolution and Environment*, 190-1. **10.** Oxford University Press, 1976. **11.** Kropotkin, "Charles Darwin," *Le Revolte*, April 29, 1882, 1. **12.** Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid*, popular edition 1915, 24 (eagles), 18 (beetles) and 48 (birds). **13.** V. C. Wynne-Edwards, *Evolution Through Group Selection*, Blackwell Scientific Pubs. 1986. A readily available, readable, bite-size summary of this book can be found in S. J. Gould's essay "Caring Groups And Selfish Genes," in his book *The Panda's Thumb*, Penguin Books, 1983

**14.** *Mutual Aid*, 50. **15.** Kropotkin, *Ethics, Origin and Development*, Tudor Publishing, 1947, 321. **16.** *Mutual Aid*, 50. **17.** Kropotkin, *Anarchism: Its Philosophy and Ideal*, 119-20. **18.** See S. Rose, *The Making of Memory*, Verso 2003 and N. Doidge, *The Brain That Changes Itself*, Penguin. **19.** Hindu Newspaper Science Bureau Report 2007 based upon research published in *Science*. **20.** L. Margulis, *Symbiosis as a Source of Evolutionary Innovation*, 11.

**21.** For a readable popular introductory outline of the Centralist Dogma and why it is clearly wrong see W. Ho, *Genetic Engineering: Dream or Nightmare*, 1998. **22.** For a fascinating readable popular introduction to Semantic Biology see M. Barbieri M., *The Organic Codes: An Introduction to Semantic Biology*, Cambridge University Press, 2003. **23.** For an entertaining introduction to morphological self-organization see Brian Goodwin, *How the Leopard Changed Its Spots*.

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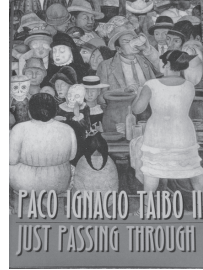
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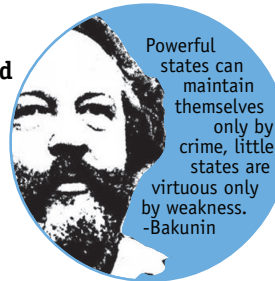
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